Regional Planning System Study

A SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING SYSTEM STUDY

A Discussion Paper

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AFFAIRS OR THE ALBERTA PLANNING BOARD

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A SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING SYSTEM STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this discussion paper is to share with the elected members of the regional planning commissions -- and other interested parties -- the preliminary findings of the Regional Planning System Study, with a view to stimulating debate on what actions the Alberta Planning Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs can take to improve the system. It is intended that the Board will hold discussions on these matters over the next few months, with all interested parties, prior to action being taken.

2. CONSULTATIVE APPROACH AND INTERIM PRODUCTS

The Study has had as its central philosophy a belief that those groups and individuals involved in or affected by regional planning should be instrumental in examining it and suggesting the changes necessary to improve it. Consequently, great effort has gone into consulting, at every stage in the development of these preliminary findings, the following key groups:

- the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Association of Alberta Municipal Districts and Counties, represented in a joint working committee comprised of association executives;
- the Executive Directors of the eight regional planning commissions and the Director of the Planning Branch of DMA, constituted as the Task Force on Regional Planning; and
- the major Provincial departments having a role in regional planning, represented at the senior management level by Board members and at staff level by a Technical Review Committee.

The analyses and viewpoints of these client groups have been weighed -- along with the perceived interests of the Government -- and a balance has been struck which attempts not only to preserve those good features of the regional planning system but also anticipates the future and suggests changes required to prepare for it.

During the course of the Study, staff have responded to the requests of these client groups for advice and policy development; consequently, a number of actions have already been taken in the following areas:

- "housekeeping" amendments to The Planning Act, 1977
- guidelines on land use bylaw preparation
- development of the regional plan review and approval process
- guidelines on preparing regional plans
- planning policies for public lands

Both the municipal associations and the Task Force have produced public reports, for the information of the Board and the Minister. These set forth their views on regional planning and make recommendations for changes to the system. These findings have been incorporated into the Study, a brief description of which follows.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS OF REGIONAL PLANNING

Established thirty-one years ago, regional planning has grown into an activity covering virtually all of the Province, and subsuming a broad range of activities: subdivision approval, local advisory services (municipal plans and bylaws), intermunicipal discussion and problem-solving, information and public education, government and municipal liaison, provincial agency referral, and regional plan preparation and implementation.

Until the last decade, however, the regional planning commissions (RPSs) largely served in a municipal planning role, with the development of regional plans only becoming generally feasible when the Alberta Planning Fund made available, in 1971, appropriate levels of funding.

In weighing the contribution of the RPCs, it should be borne in mind that their thirty years have been the most turbulent in Alberta's history, with revolutionary changes in all aspects of society, not the least of which has been the shift from a farm-based to an urban society.

The Study concludes that regional planning has made three major contributions to this period of transition:

1. It has contributed to the development of a sound approach to the planning and development of both public and private lands, and in so doing has prevented many of the abuses of the physical and community environments so common in high growth areas.

2. The RPCs have provided, at the local municipal level, a readily available source of advice and expertise on planning and governmental matters which has contributed in important ways to the development of responsible municipal government, in a generally cost effective manner.

3. Until the Provincial government undertook a more comprehensive and aggressive role in environmental planning and management matters in the 1970's, the RPCs were one of the major watchdogs of the broad "public interest" in these areas.

The Study concludes that historically, in the main, the Government and the public have been well-served by the commissions and by the active concern of both their elected and staff members in the promotion of sound planning and community development.

4. RECENT PROBLEMS

Ironically, the very success of the RPCs in encouraging municipal awareness of planning issues has now become their greatest source of criticism, as many municipalities respond to the requirements of the new Planning Act only to perceive that the RPC's have effectively limited their abilities to discharge local responsibilites.

The need for a new balance in the relationships of the municipal, regional and Provincial levels of regional planning is emphasized in the following summary of key problems the Study identifies:

1. Regional plans in general are seen to be so detailed, regulatory, and inflexible as to pre-empt the municipal prerogatives in land use planning.

2. Rural municipal interests in regional planning have suffered at the hands of some urban dominated commissions, where the present two-thirds requirement for adoption of the regional plan permits the urban majority to outvote the rural minority, despite the latter having responsibility for the greatest proportion of land in the region.

3. The further delegation of subdivision approval authority without some stringent conditions attached is seen as posing a danger to sound community land use planning, as well as presenting municipalities with expensive and troublesome problems.

4. Municipal and regional plans are, in a number of cases, being developed without a process of consultation to ensure that conformity occurs and that conflicts requiring Board or Court action do not arise.

5. Regional plans have generally failed to take account of Provincial policies or activities; many departments are not aware of the potential value of closer coordination with the regional planning commissions; and the commissions, in turn, do not always receive the most useful input from the departments, especially since departments may no longer sit on the commissions.

6. There is widespread misunderstanding and ignorance concerning why the Province has established and maintains the regional planning system, and the role the Province wishes to see played by municipal government, the development industry, the general public, and the planners.

5. SUMMARY OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Study endorses recent changes aimed at extending the responsibilities for planning to the municipal level; enlarging the role of the Alberta Planning Board to include non-governmental membership; and introducing the concept of conflict resolution as a legitimate Board activity.

The principal aim of the Study draft recommendations are to build upon these and other recent Board-initiated innovations to achieve an improved balance of roles and responsibilities between the three levels in the system, by strengthening the Provincial and municipal roles, and by equipping the RPCs with the means to better relate to the other two levels in its policy development and advisory activities, through the adoption of a facilitative, coordinating approach to planning to replace the traditional but no longer acceptable detailed, control orientation.

Specifically, the draft recommendations seek to:

1. establish the regional plan as a broad policy document rather than a detailed regulatory, control document, so as to better address the needs of both the municipalities and the Provincial government;

2. encourage a more consensual, equitable approach to the commissions' approval of the regional plan by suggesting a change in The Planning Act from the two-thirds majority vote requirement to a simple majority vote of both the rural and urban classes of municipality;

3. strengthening municipal planning capability, through making DMA staff and budgetary resources available on a limited basis, along with input from the approriate RPC, on a jointly negotiated basis;

4. put in place certain procedural safeguards so that municipal plans are developed in conformity with the regional plan, through a continuous process of municipal-regional consultation;

5. re-establish the formal role of Provincial departments at the regional level through establishment of "Provincial-regional coordination committees" attached to each RPC;

6. encourage, through a continuation and enlargement of existing training and advisory programs, a strengthening of the skills and abilities of RPC professional staffs in the areas of:
   - advising elected officials and ensuring their early and continuous involvement in developing policies
   - negotiating with municipalities and the Province
   - adopting innovative approachs to regional planning, and
   - the team management approach as a means of maximizing staff resources and serving the region better; and

7. establish a continuous Board-RPC program of public information designed to inform municipal officials, the development industry, and the general public concerning the regional planning system, their role in it, their rights and obligations, and the means for obtaining assistance from the appropriate government agencies.

It is anticipated that the Board would strengthen its recently adopted leadership and monitoring role; continue to act as a catalyst in the development of Provincial land use policies (such as the Rural Industrial Land Use Policy); and continue to strongly encourage the RPCs to develop regional plans which are accurate reflections of current municipal and Provincial policy aspirations, as well as being technically sound and informative public documents.

These and its other new roles will most certainly require that the Board streamline its policy development and regional plan review procedures; strengthen its technical capabilities in a number of areas; and examine its present heavy workload in appeals and give consideration to new procedures to mitigate the situation.

The staff and resource implications -- if any -- of these changes to the Board operations are currently under investigation.

6. ABBREVIATED RECOMMENDATIONS

In the interests of simplicity, the Study recommendations have been abbreviated here so that the reader can appreciate the general thrust of the findings. We trust that those seeking a more definitive answer will refer to the agruments advanced later in the report, and especially those associated with specific, detailed recommendations.

As might be expected in a Discussion Paper, we are more concerned with the *principle* involved in a recommendation rather than in its *precise language*. We look to our discussants to help in the refinement of the language and the operationalization of the concepts.

The Regional Plan

1. a. The regional plan should be a leadership document, stimulating a high quality regional environment, through the management of growth and change.

   b. It should be non-technical, simply written, aimed at a variety of lay users.

2. The regional plan should be a policy document forming a framework for guiding municipal planning.

3. Ways of reducing inter-municipal resource competition should be found so as to not jeopardize regional planning.

4. The Board should strengthen its policy development role in regional planning through a collaborative approach with Provincial departments and the RPCs.

5. a. Regional plans ought to stimulate regional economic development.

   b. Regional economic development efforts should proceed collaboratively with the Provincial departments, supported by the Board.

6. a. The regional plan should be the supreme document in the hierarchy of planning instruments.

   b. The Board should not be bound in appeals by the land use bylaw.

7. The regional plan should produce workable policies guiding development in the region, through sensitivity to Provincial, municipal and regional concerns.

8. In its review of regional plans, the Board should require sensitivity to Provincial and municipal concerns but without intruding upon the prerogatives of either level.

9. a. The regional plan should be comprehensive, covering at least eight functional areas.

   b. Provincial departments should utilize the regional plan review and approval process as an opportunity to develop, collaboratively, sets of regionally sensitive policies.

   c. The Board should encourage, and make staff available, to stimulate Provincial department input into the regional plans.

10. a. The regional plan should be a flexible policy document designed as a focus for continuous discussion and negotiation with departments and municipalities.

    b. The Board should encourage the development of processes and mechanisms for negotiation and facilitation between RPCs and municipalities, and should offer training opportunities to staffs wishing to participate.

11. a. Discussions should be held and guidelines prepared to ensure that regional plans and municipal instruments are brought into conformity, in those cases where the latter predates the former.

    b. The Act should be amended so that "direct control districts" in land use bylaws are required to be governed by specifications in municipal planning instruments, and their use would be permitted only when qualified staff are available to interpret them.

    c. The Board should develop guidelines on how municipal planning instruments can be developed in conformity with the regional plan.

Membership

12. The Act should be changed so that regional plan or amendment approvals would require at least 50 percent support from the urban municipalities, plus at least 50 percent support from the rurals, before being officially adopted by the commissions.

13. Requests to change commission membership should be required to demonstrate consideration for certain Provincial interests: representation by population, and land area size; continued membership for participating municipalities, and participation by interest groups.

Delegation of SAA

14. The approval of subdivisions is most properly a local planning prerogative, similar to the exercise of the development control authority.

15. The Board should advise the Minister on the delegation of SAA for specific municipalities, utilizing a set of criteria developed for that purpose.

Plan Non-Conformity

16. Commissions are encouraged to develop a cooperative climate in their regions through information exchange, discussion and negotiations centred around the conformity question.

17. Guidelines should be developed, and workshops and conferences designed, around the topic of the relationship of the various statutory planning instruments.

18. The Act should be amended instituting referral procedures so that municipal planning instruments are reviewed by the RPC prior to their adoption by the municipality, so as to ensure conformity between municipal and regional documents. Disputes may be referred to the Board for hearing and resolution.

19. Quality municipal planning and development ought to be encouraged through making training available to development control officers.

Provincial-Regional Coordination

20. The Board should actively encourage Provincial policy development around particular problem or issue areas, for inclusion in regional plans, and should support an intergovernmental demonstration project.

21. Board departmental members are encouraged to develop compilations of Provincial policies of relevance to the regional planning process of the RPCs.

22. To encourage good communication between the RPCs and the departments, the Act should be amended to formally establish "Provincial-Regional Coordination Committees". These would be forums for continuing discussions and, where desired, joint policy development efforts.

The Role of RPCs

23. The important role of the RPC should be confirmed publically and a public information program established to inform decision-makers and the public.

24. a. The Board should negotiate with each RPC a set of goals and work activities designed to equip them for their changing mandate.

b. The Board should offer training to modify their organizations to better respond to the new pressures.

25. Training in negotiation and facilitation skills should be offered to those RPCs desiring it, since a set of new relationships is now required of the commissions.

26. How to more creatively involve elected officials in the work of the RPCs should be explored.

27. RPC Staff are encouraged to utilize new decision-making technologies which encourage political involvement earlier in the planning process.

28. The use of committees offers possibilities for more effective use of both elected officials and staff.

29. RPC Staff should become more skilled in, and should adopt programs of public information and education.

30. a. The RPCs are encouraged to consider formation of an association concerned with regional planning, its contributions and its problems.

b. The Board should support such an organization, were it to be established.

31. The RPCs are encouraged to adopt staff development and team building programs as a way of maximizing resources and strengthening their organizational capabilities.

32. The RPCs are encouraged to adopt the "area planning team" approach, to better serve their regions with "one planning" service, and to better utilize staff development opportunities.

33. Staffing and associated concerns ought to be examined jointly by the Board and the PRCs.

Municipal SAAs

34. a. The costs to a municipality and an RPC of assuming SAA should be documented and made available.

b. The Board should consider subsidizing hardship cases.

Municipal-Regional Relations

35. The Department of Municipal Affairs should develop an orientation program for elected officials; a training program (on planning) for municipal administrators and others; and sponsor workshops and seminars on a regular basis, related to problem exploration and resolution.

Metropolitan Development

36. The regional plan should continue to be used as a focus for dealing with intermunicipal, urban fringe and metropolitan issues, through a number of approaches.

37. The Board should play a pro-active role in monitoring metropolitan development and recommending solutions before the problems become entrenched.

A SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE REGIONAL PLANNING SYSTEM STUDY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this discussion paper is to share with the elected members of the regional planning commissions -- and other interested parties -- the preliminary findings of the regional planning system study. It is intended to encourage the fullest discussion, aimed at the development of understanding about the roles of all participants in regional planning, their problems and difficulties, and the most feasible way of resolving them while improving the overall system.

The Board, on whose behalf the study has been conducted, wishes to solicit the views of the commission members -- as well as those of the Provincial departments, municipalities, the development industry, and other interested groups -- and to that end will be conducting discussions over the next few months.

2. STATUS OF STUDY

The findings reported here, in abbreviated form, represent a preliminary statement, *from the perspective of the Board's staff*, of the major strengths and weaknesses of the regional planning system. This perspective has been shaped by a series of frank and comprehensive discussions with the staff and executives of major system participants over the last eighteen months, including more recently the Alberta Planning Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

These findings have been abstracted from voluminous background materials, most of which have been shared with those advising the Study team. The abstraction was done under a tight timeframe, and therefore may show a certain lack of continuity and polish, which subsequent revision will hopefully eliminate.

Now the analyses are sufficiently advanced to extend the consultative process to include the key decision-makers at the regional level, the elected members of the regional planning commissions, and others who have not shared in the technical process up to this point.

It is anticipated that the insights of these parties will play an important part in determining the course of action to be taken by the Board and the Minister.

3. HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

The Study has been conducted with two fundamental principles in the forefront:

- groups and individuals which participate in or are affected by regional planning should be *centrally* involved in examining it and in recommending the changes necessary to improve it; and

- the study should be conducted in such a way that *as it proceeds* it will examine and resolve problems *identified by the involved groups* as important to them and their operations.

This 'action research' approach has resulted in a number of changes being accomplished during the course of the Study:

- "housekeeping" amendments to the Planning Act, 1977;

- the development of guidelines on land use bylaw preparation;

- the development of the regional plan review and approval process; and

- the development of guidelines on preparing regional plans;

- the development of approaches to the planning for public lands.

These changes to the system were not inconsiderable, and went some way to addressing many of the issues identified by the system participants.

Central to the conduct of the Study has been a commitment to the fullest discussion with the affected groups (commensurate with time and staff resources).

This has resulted in staff being able to draw on the advice and wisdom of people knowledgeable at each level in the system, and has contributed to a balance and comprehensiveness of viewpoints which it might otherwise have been difficult to achieve.

The following groups were invited by the Minister of the Alberta Planning Board to assist the Board and its staff in the conduct of the Study:

- the Executive Directors of the regional planning commissions, comprising the Task Force on Regional Planning;
- the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Association of Alberta Municipal Districts and Counties, represented by their executive members on the Joint Working Committee; and
- the major Provincial departments having a role in regional planning, represented by staff through the Technical Review Committee.

Staff of Inter-Agency Planning Branch conducted the Study on behalf of the Board, reporting to it regularly for advice and guidance, and review of the findings on a continuous basis.

4. SUPPORT FOR PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The findings developed so far in the Study, and the recommendations issuing from them, can be directly attributed to the above three groups, the Alberta Planning Board and the staff conducting the research.

Each group has given its support to a number of recommendations and has made thoughtful comments on a number more. The Study has been greatly assisted by the contributions made by the two municipal associations, and the executive directors of the RPC's, who have publicly presented their views in two reports to the Government, entitled:

> Municipal Attitudes Towards Regional Planning in Alberta, Joint Working Committee, AUMA & AAMDC, October 1980.

Interim Report and Recommendations to the Alberta Planning Board, Directors Task Force on Regional Planning, April 1981

The municipal report was helpful in adding to the data base of the Study, pinpointing both positive and negative aspects of regional planning from the local point of view, and suggesting where ameliorative actions were especially needed. It corroborated data from other sources on how the system is viewed by some participants.

The Task Force report put forward twelve recommendations which reflect the administrative and technical concerns of the RPC planning directors, and which relate to improving the day-to-day operations of the commissions. These have been accepted by the Study team as important *transitional* concerns in better enabling the new tasks facing regional planning to be discharged, and are therefore incorporated in this report.

The manner in which these recommendations and views have been balanced one against the other, and those of each group compared with those of others, will become apparent in the analyses to follow. Where there have been difficulties reconciling competing views, the Study has given extra weight to the broad Provincial interest and to the necessity to prepare for the turbulent future doubtless awaiting the regional planning system.

5. THE CHANGING STATUTORY BASE FOR PLANNING

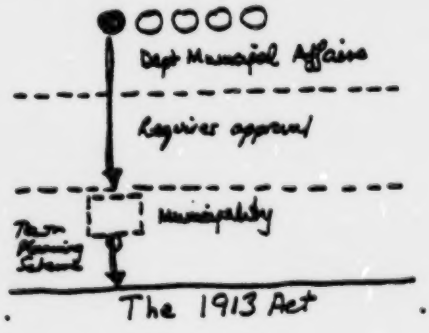
Responsiveness to Demands

Since its origin in 1913 with the establishment of the first Provincial statute, planning has evolved in response to particular pressures on the environment in the form of unrestrained urban growth and threats to the rural community, into a broad tool of both municipal and Provincial government. Without its contribution, the burgeoning periods of growth and the intervals of stability or decline would have left their marks indelibly on the Alberta landscape, affecting the quality of life of all Albertans.

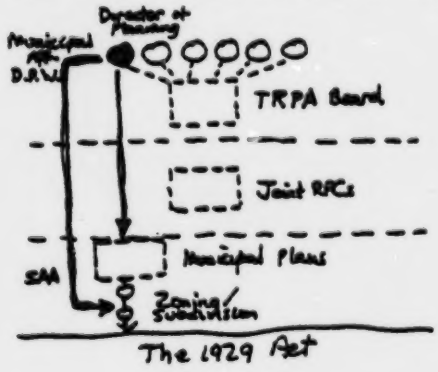
Much of the flavour of planning's evolution can be captured through examining the ways in which five Planning Acts put in place or modified a set of organizations, processes and instruments, each tailored to meet the political and environmental needs of the time.

The Early Acts

The 1913 Act was a pioneering document, closely following the 1909 British model, introduced to allow municipal governments to cope with fringe growth engendered by the speculative land boom of 1906-13. It permitted municipalities to do "town planning schemes" once the Province had given its approval. The Act went untested since the boom which stimulated it ceased abruptly, and it was not until the late Twenties that interest in planning was revived (Figure 1).



The 1929 Act consolidated and expanded the 1928 "Town Planning and Preservation of Natural Beauty Act" which extended planning to the rural areas. It was a remarkably progressive piece of legislation, enabling the establishment of provincial policy through a Town and Rural Planning Advisory Board and a Provincial Director of Town Planning; joint planning through zoning, subdivision control and plans. In it we see most of the elements of today's three-tier system.



Period of Dormancy

Once more, a promising tool was put in place, only to have the growth which stimulated its development halt abruptly. The two decades of the Depression and World War II saw little growth in the Province and not much in the way of pressure for new planning activity. The discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947 changed

Figure 1. Major Events in Regional Planning

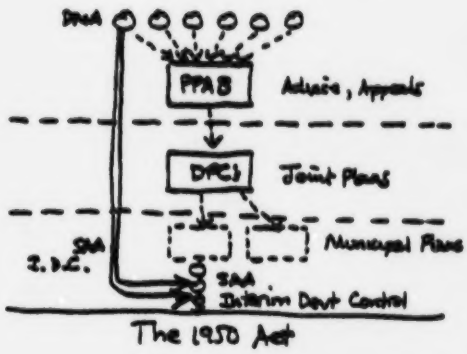
1908 - 12	*Speculative land boom.*
1911	Department of Municipal Affairs established. City of Calgary establishes City Planning Commission.
1913	Town Planning Act.
1914 - 18	*First World War: slump in land boom with planning rendered dormant.*
1928	"An Act to Facilitate Town Planning and Preservation of the Natural Beauties of the Province" established through efforts of United Farm Women. Provincial Director of Town Planning appointed.
1929	Town Planning Act: first comprehensive planning legislation, establishing an Advisory Board, Director of Planning, town plans, zoning, replotting and precursors of RPC's made possible. 50 municipalities adopt zoning bylaws.
1930	*The Depression: planning becomes inoperative.* Responsibility for natural resources transferred from Canada to Alberta.
1930, 31, 34, 37	Minor amendments to Town Planning Act.
1940 - 45	*World War II: upswing in economy.*
1942	*Alcan Highway.* Town Planning & Preservation of Natural Beauty Act.
1947	*Leduc oil discovery.*
1949	First town planner in Edmonton. Growth study by Bland and Spence - Sales
1950	Town and Rural Planning Act: District Planning Commissions established with Provincial subsidies. Powers of Provincial Planning Advisory Board broadened. Edmonton District Planning Commission established.
1951	Calgary hires planning director; Calgary District Planning Commission established.
1951, 52	Planning Commission established. Minor amendments to the Act.
1952	Red Deer District Planning Commission established.
1953	Edmonton and Calgary given subdivision approval authority from the Province.
1953	Amendments to Act.
1954	Medicine Hat District Planning Commission established.
1955	Oldman River District Planning Commission established. Minor amendments to Act.
1956	Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Development of Calgary and Edmonton (McNally Commission). Act rewritten.
1957	Amendments to Act.
1958	Peace River District Planning Commission established.
1958 - 59	Amendments to Act.
1960	Battle River District Planning Commission established. Minor amendments to Act.
1961	*Complete review of planning system initiated by Minister of Municipal Affairs.* Minor amendments to Act.
1963	The Planning Act: changes name of District Planning Commissions to Regional Planning Commissions; regional plans made mandatory.
1964,65, 67	Amendments to Act
1968	Act amended: Regional Planning Commissions approve subdivisions for all municipalities: funding contributions made universal: Preliminary Regional plans required by 1972.
1969, 70	Minor amendments to Act.
1970	Alberta Planning Fund established. Department of Environment established.
1971 - 72	*"Task Force on Urbanization and the Future" provides an opportunity to discuss regional planning and a number of public issues.*
1973	*Review of Planning Act conducted and public discussions held.*
1970 - 76	Eight new Provincial departments established. Minor amendments to Planning Act.
1977	The Planning Act, 1977 brought important changes: regional plans made mandatory by 1982; general municipal plans and land use bylaws required; devolution of subdivision approval authority permitted.
1979	*"Regional Planning System Study" formally initiates a process of consultation and problem-solving.*
1979	Revised TOR are approved and signed by the D.M. Interviews with provincial departments to identify issues on provincial-regional relationships. Meeting with TRC re: participation at Jasper Conference. Presentation to Jasper Conference involving a panel discussion; presentation of issues; and discussions and debate of issues by system participants. Workshop with TRC and RPC directors in Calgary re: co-ordination for regional planning and proposed guidelines for regional plan review and approval. APB agrees in principle to Regional Plan Review and Approval Mechanism. Arrangements made to involve AUMA and AAMD&C in the RPS Study through Ministerial invitation.
1980	Regional Plan Guidelines adopted by APB. Formation of a Joint Working Committee of representatives from the AUMA and AAMD&C. Presentation at annual APB Jasper Conference. Workshop with regional planning agencies on the adopted regional plan guidelines. Initiation of a Task Force of RPC directors to provide input into the RPS Study. Additional interviews with Provincial Departments to fill gaps and to validate information. Additional interviews with RPC's to develop and validate RPC profiles. Presentation of report by AUMA and AAMD&C entitled "Municipal Attitudes Towards Regional Planning in Alberta". Presentation to CPAC Conference in Calgary on selected issues raised in RPS Study. Distribution of Municipal Attitudes on Regional Planning report. Ongoing consultation with T.F. and J.W.C. on the generation of recommendations.
1981	AACIP Conference in Jasper. Briefing to the APB on preliminary Study findings. Presentation to the CIP Conference in Regina. Briefing to Minister on preliminary Study findings.

all of that, with an unprecedented period of growth which has stretched into the Eighties, stimulating dramatic changes in the way in which governments at all levels have had to change and adopt.

The 1950 Act

The 1950 Act established the District Planning Commission, a means of allowing the largest municipalities to cope with the feverish growth induced by Leduc. Both Edmonton and Calgary hired planning staffs and the Province allowed the use of "interim development controls" to permit growth management during the period when plans were in preparation.

The DPCs were voluntary associations of municipalities with largely advisory powers, restricted to assisting in the preparation of municipal or joint municipal plans and zoning bylaws, when requested to do so by member municipalities.



The 1950 Act

While the 1950 Act re-established the earlier concept of a three-tier planning system, the relationships between the levels were not fully delineated, although the Provincial roles in subdivision appeals and funding were added to the existing one of providing advice to the municipal level.

The Fifties

The Fifties were a decade of great growth in the organizations of regional planning, with the establishment of Edmonton DPC (1950), Calgary (1951), Red Deer (1952), Medicine Hat (1954), Oldman River (1955), Peace River (1958) and Battle River (1960). It should be noted, however, that the legislation during this period contemplated the DPCs performing largely a municipal planning function, for more than one municipality, rather than a specifically regional or subprovincial role.

Several important elements were added to the system during the Fifties. In 1957, DPCs with member municipalities having in excess of 50,000 people were *required* to prepare a District General Plan, thus establishing the principle that planning may be made mandatory for municipalities in particular circumstances. And the subdivision approval authority was delegated by the Province to regional and municipal authorities, starting with the largest, which created the greatest difficulties in a centrally administered approval system.

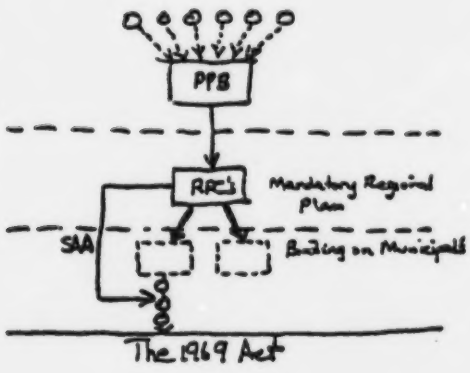
The principle of conformity between planning instruments was developed in this period with members of DPCs required to ensure that their zoning was in conformity with the District General Plan or the Preliminary District General Plan.

Planning Reviewed

In 1961, the Minister of Municipal Affairs initiated the first review of the planning legislation, culminating in a new Act in 1963, which changed the name of the DPCs to regional planning commissions (RPCs) and required all commissions to prepare regional plans (although no deadline was prescribed).

Changes to the Act in 1968 and 1969 had significant impacts on the system, establishing the RPCs as subdivision approving authorities for all municipalities in their region, *whether members of the commission or not*. Nonmembers were also required to contribute to the support of the commission, and a deadline was set for completion of Preliminary Regional Plans. These were to be binding on *all* municipalities.

Thus, by the end of the Sixties, the organizations were in place and a set of relationships were structured which, for the first time, made a regional (as opposed to intermunicipal) approach to planning a practical possibility.



Provision of Planning

The establishment of the Alberta Planning Fund in 1971 provided the monies whereby regional planning could become a widespread activity of the RPCs, allowing them to expand into areas beyond municipal-oriented planning and advice and subdivision approval. At the

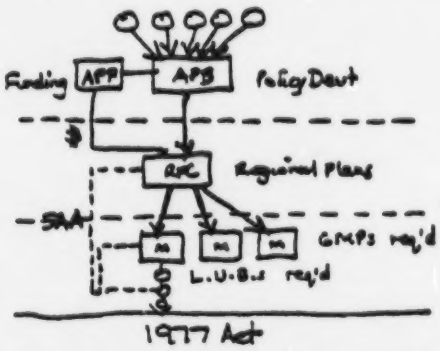
same time, the compulsory participation of all municipalities increased the demand on the RPCs in the local sphere, tending to offset the newly freed funds available for regional planning.

This was the beginning too of a period of growth in the Provincial role with the Department of Environment established in 1970, and a number of others over the next decade.

The New Planning Act

In 1977, a new Planning Act was introduced, setting forth some rather fundamental realignments in the relationships within the three-tier system. For the first time, a complete hierarchy of planning instruments was called for, with regional plans made mandatory by 1982, and general municipal plans and land use bylaws (for urban municipalities over 1,000 population and rurals over 10,000) by March, 1980. These requirements had the effect of ensuring that individual development decisions would -- when all instruments were in place -- have been scrutinized against a set of public planning and management policies representing "the public interest" as perceived at the municipal, regional and Provincial levels of government.

The municipal level instruments are required to conform to the regional plan, and the regional plan, in turn, is approved by the Board and the Minister. The new Act thus places a premium on the interrelationship between instruments being such that the prerogatives of the governments involved are not pre-empted or reduced by either the regional plan or municipal instruments. This suggests the critical role which negotiation must play in developing instruments which dovetail and are in conformity.



The Provincally-defined public interest now has a better opportunity for influencing the nature of the regional plan through the development of policies at both levels, in tandem, as the Board's regional plan review and approval process proceeds in conjunction with regional plan preparation.

Problems of disagreement over conformity can be appealed to the Board, in case of regional and municipal instruments, while the Provincial interest is assured by the requirement that the regional plan be approved by the APB and ratified by the Minister before it can become law.

Inherent in the philosophy of a hierarchy of planning and implementation instruments is a belief that certain activities are appropriate at each level in the hierarchy, based on which organization can most effectively do the job. Thus, the new Act makes it possible for municipalities to obtain subdivision approval authority, reflecting a belief that the approval of subdivisions is, like the approval of development, essentially a local decision, to be made in conformace with both municipal and regional policy instruments. The Act permits the Minister to devolve this authority to municipalities, as he sees fit, in accordance with certain criteria.

6. FOUR HISTORICAL THEMES

Four themes seem to characterize the changes which have occurred between 1913 and 1981 in the organizations, planning instruments and relationships within the planning system.

Growth and Change

A principal theme has been the support given to planning as a tool of government during periods of growth in the economy, times of "boom", as a means of controlling speculative activity in the land development industry. Thus the first Planning Act was in response to the boom of 1906-13; the development of District Planning Commissions followed the discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947.

Conversely, planning's support declined once the boom was replaced, as it so frequently has been in Alberta's history, by "bust". Thus planning slid into quiescence during the Twenties, and when the Depression hit, the Town Planning Branch of Muncipal Affairs was disbanded.

Shift in Governmental Power

The history of planning has been one characterized by the spread of particular instruments and the development of organizations at progressively lower levels in the hierarchy. Planning was initially started to allow municipalities to exercise control over their own developments. This power was expanded later to allow for a full range of instruments, and when some forms of growth seemed beyond the grasp of a single municipality to control, "joint municipal" then "district planning commissions" were permitted.

Membership in the DPCs was at first voluntary, and remained that way for a number of years. When subdivision approval authority was delegated, it too was initially available only to members. So too, only later were regional plans required. In much the same way, municipal instruments were first made available as optional tools; when they became generally acceptable, their use became a requirement for local governments.

It is important to note that the Province has generally instituted new powers in response to particular situations, then extended them if they proved acceptable. Almost every planning instrument in use today was introduced in a voluntary manner, tried out, and then made a formal requirement only later, after it had received broad support.

Increasing Complexity

Planning began to be an activity *dependent* upon the involvement of two or more governments after the transfer of Canada lands to the Province, in 1930, although before then Provincial approval was required for a number of municipally initiated planning activities. The Depression delayed the Province extending its role, and it was not until after the Leduc discovery that the potential began to be developed for overlapping involvements and conflicts.

During the Seventies the Province assumed a leadership role in natural resources management and environmental conservation, and the growth in Provincial departments reflected these and other new areas of interest. The increased complexity in the environment also placed pressure for the instruments utilized to become sophisticated, to change in ways appropriate to the new demands.

Changing Philosophy of Planning

A particular philosophy of planning was evident in the early Acts, a philosophy characterized by planning as a technical activity "to be carried out by experts whose scientific knowledge equips them to judge that certain courses of action are "best" because they maximize utility."

This approach proved successful until the Seventies, when the RPC planners were joined by Provincial planners in the management of regional resources. The old utilitarian approach proved less useful in the face of the increasing complexity of planning. Complicated referral procedures, a plethora of interdepartmental and intergovernmental committees and special purpose organizations; the overlap and conflict between interest areas; the increase in functional areas dealt with in planning: all of these presented challenges to the utility and political acceptability of the "one best" solution.

7. THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT OF PLANNING

There are eight regional planning commissions, two special status regional planning bodies, well over a dozen Provincial departments and some two hundred and fifty municipalities which, in one way or another, participate in regional planning. We will focus mainly on the RPCs and the Provincial departments, examining the major demands to which they have had to respond over the past ten to fifteen years.

Changes Since Leduc

In the seventy years that planning has evolved in Alberta, the most dramatic and far-reaching changes have occurred in the period since Leduc and, more particularly, in the last ten to fifteen years. Tremendous growth has occurred, accompanied by cultural, social and political developments of an unprecedented nature. These have placed great demands on planning -- both the people and the organizations -- and subjected it to strains and pressures to which it has had to adapt.

Population Growth

The Province's population has grown from 1,463,203 in 1966 to some 2,113,000 in 1980, a growth rate of 44.4 percent (compared with 20.0 percent for Canada, 41.2 percent for B. C. and 23.4 percent for Ontario). The net influx of people over this period

Figure 2 Demands on the Regional Planning System

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Major Private Sector Projects
- Procter & Gamble (Grande Prairie)
- Syncrude
- Great Canadian Oil Sands (GCOS)
- Alberta Gas Ethylene (Red Deer)
- Alberta Power Corp. (Grande Cache)
- AGTL & Allarco (Medicine Hat)
- cottage development (e.g. St. Paul, Cold Lake, Bonnyville)
- "acreages" development
- major tourism/recreation report projects (e.g. Sunshine Village, Hamlet Basin)
- major dormitory, suburban and "new town" projects
- power projects
- transmission corridors
- CANFOR (Peace River region)

Provincial Economic Development
- intra-Provincial migration
- immigration (to Alberta)
- manufacturing sector growth
- services sector growth
- tourism/recreation
- retail sector growth
- agricultural changes
- resources sector expansion
- growth in public sector - rate inflation
- interest rates
- personnel shortages/competition
- inter-area competition for growth
- speculation/growth syndrome
- dominant location of new development (especially refining, etc.)
- inflation and demand for land

2. URBAN GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Metropolitan Growth
- dormitory urban centres
- regional servicing issues
- lake capacity management
- transportation pressures
- overspill and related industrialization
- speculation and growth expectations
- housing demand
- country residential pressures
- environmental management
- metropolitan absorption (annexation) of small centres
- land assembly/disposal by major development corporations
- municipal land banking

Major Cities Growth
- urban primacy in agricultural/resource regions
- increasing residential densities
- innovative housing & subdivision design
- industrialization
- extensive commuter & transportation pressures
- annexations

Small Communities Growth
- servicing demands
- community services demands
- downtown revitalization
- economic development pressures
- growth management

3. RURAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Resource Areas
- parks
- forest reserves & related areas
- gas fields
- oil fields
- pipeline corridors
- coal fields
- other resource areas (e.g. Silica Bentonite)
- irrigation & water management projects
- country residential developments
- ranching (declining population, high land prices, larger units)
- grain areas
- dairy areas
- mixed livestock areas
- urban fringe conflicts
- country residential developments
- grazing leases

4. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Public Participation
- public participation
- public awareness
- public concerns articulation

Environmental Management & Conservation

Quality of Life
- leisure/parks demands
- community identity/preservation
- heritage/cultural & related demands

Growth Expectation
- growth demands
- speculation
- participation

Demographic Factors
- "aging" of the population

Control
- legitimacy of "planning"

5. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Provincial Government (general)
- Provincial Election (197)
- Provincial Election (197)
- variations
- growth of Civil Service
- growth of new departments & agencies
- decision-making process (Provincial-to-Municipal)

Provincial Government (Urban-Economic Deconcentration)
- expectations/speculation
- Edmonton-Calgary corridor
- Provincial programs (e.g. TGSB)

The Planning Fund

The Planning Act (1977)
- Regional Plans (1982)
- New Land Use Bylaws
- Municipal General Plans
- appeals through Court action
- Subdivisions Approval Authority/ Responsibility (1968)

5. (continued) .....

Provincial Government (other)
- Dept. of Agriculture
- Dept. of Environment
- The ERCB
- Parks/Reserve, etc.
- Northeast Commission
- LAB
- APB
- Municipal Finance
- Dept. of Transport
- Special Areas
- Improvement Districts
- Dept. of Municipal Affairs
- Task Force on Urbanization
- Commissions
- "Planning Agencies" in government
- "Eastern Canadian" preconceptions
- ESIP (Dept. of Energy & Natural Resources)
- AGT
- MEDC
- Dept. of Public Works & Housing
- Dept. of Health
- Dept. of Education
- Dept. of Tourism & Small Business
- Land Use Forum

Municipal Government
- local government restructuring
- inter-municipal cooperation
- some specialization of personnel
- more public relations
- more social and economic functions
- financial management developments
- personnel management development
- computers and information technology

Federal Government
- Parks Canada
- DREE
- FERA
- NIP (CSP) & RRAP
- AIB
- rail abandonment (CTC)
- DINA
- Railway relocation

has averaged 21,206 persons per year, resulting in a rapid rate of increase in the labour force, and in the rate of household formation.

The strength and size of the economy has grown too, from a gross domestic product of $5,009 million in 1966 to $35,637 million in 1979 (unadjusted dollars). The economy is now characterized by a large services sector, reflecting strong growth in business services, real estate, finance and community services, overshadowing the agricultural sector. The manufacturing sector has increased its importance significantly.

Changing Settlement Pattern

These and other changes have been manifested in rapid urban growth, with the acceleration of rural out-migration and metropolitan dominance. The Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan regions have grown dramatically, with a spin-off into the "development corridor" linking them, and in a limited number of high growth resource centres. Significant, if less consistent growth has occurred in a number of other major centres (Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Brooks).

The same urban growth has manifested itself in the decline or virtual stagnation of many small rural service centres, a rapid growth in rural residential (and some industrial) developments, suburban expansion, the development of dormitory centres and a high rate of municipal annexation activity.

Nature of the Demands

In the 1966-80 period, Alberta's regional planning system has developed and responded in this environment of great flux and change. The economic and population factors noted above (and others, unmentioned) have produced a relatively young, highly mobile,high income population, essentially urban in life-style and expectations. The same economic and social developments have involved significant changes in the scale and nature of the development industry, changes in legislation and in government policies and initiatives (Figure 2).

It is important to note that the impacts of these social, economic and institutional factors have manifested themselves in planning activities other than those confined to conventional and land use policies and the land subdivision process. While long range planning, the subdivision approvals process and the preparation of land use bylaws continue to dominate the activities

of most regional planning agencies, developments in the agencies since the late 1960's reflect the growing presence and complexity of social and economic considerations.

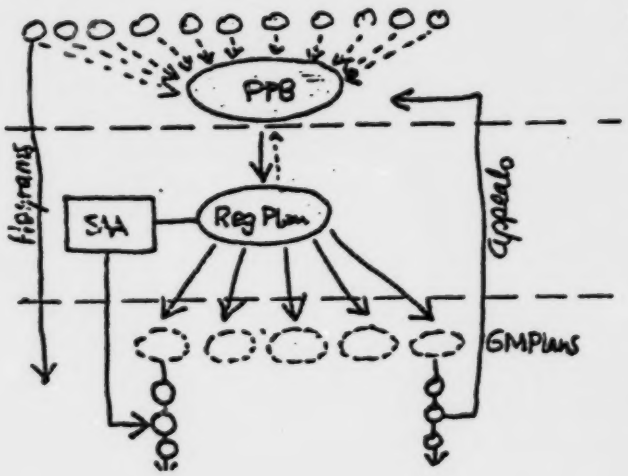
8. THE CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING

Perhaps of equal importance to the way in which planning has been conducted is the changing organizational framework, by which planning is enabled to deal with the "outside" social and economic realities.

For the sake of simplicity we will examine the period before and after the 1977 Act, since it represents something of a watershed in how planning is to operate.

The Pre-1978 Framework

At the Provincial level, in the period 1968-77, we see considerable programmatic and some planning-related activities, delivered by departments to municipalities or by departments acting independently of the RPC's on the development of major projects or on Crown lands. The Provincial Planning Board confined itself largely to its statutory appeal role, and did little in the way of policy development; while plans were required to be approved by the Board, criteria for approval had not been made explicit, nor was there a formalized procedure for inputting the policies of various departments. In the absence of policy development, communications down the hierarchy was informal and sporadic. Procedures for handling problems or new initiatives were limited.



At the regional level, the RPC's spent most of their energy in doing subdivision approvals and municipal planning for their constituent communities. Regional planning, when eventually required, was a latecomer, at least in the sense of being reflected

in a particular instrument. The Acts prior to 1977 encouraged the regional plan to be detailed; it was made binding on all members only relatively recently. In the absence of regional plans, and in many communities, municipal plans, the subdivision approving authority was utilized to ensure that planning standards were maintained.

Municipal planning was a voluntary activity, with some communities having plans and others not. Many had some implementation devices, but by and large, planning was largely a prerogative of the RPC's.

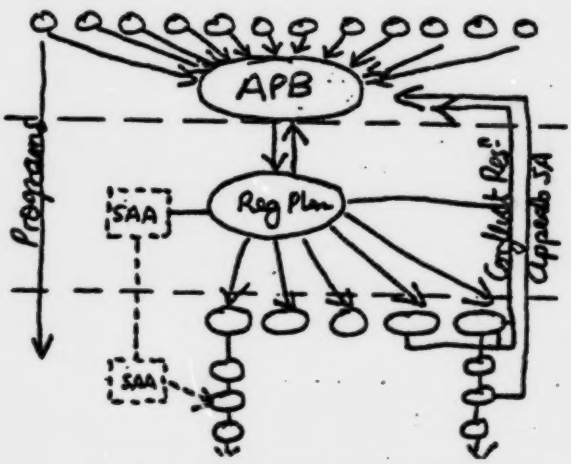
The Post-1978 Framework

The 1977 Act and the amendments since then lay out a set of organizational relationships which are different from those in the earlier period. It is the contention of the Study that the full ramifications of the legislation have yet to take hold in the system: agencies are struggling through a transitional phase. Some, of course, have realized more fully the ramifications of the Act and have anticipated the future demands they will be required to respond to, and have structured their operations and activities accordingly.

The widespread activity of the Provincial government has continued into the post-1978 period, but an increasing sensitivity to regional planning is evident. While programs tend to be delivered directly to municipalities, with no reference to the RPC's there is increasing communication on planning and development matters. Departments now input into the Alberta Planning Board, and have made a commitment to review regional plans, if not to necessarily develop parallel policy sets. The Board itself has assumed a policy role, although with no certainty of staff resources this is not fully exploited. A new role has been added, that of conflict resolution.

At the regional level, the RPC's are now feeling the pressure to integrate Provincial as well as municipal concerns into their planning activities. The regional plan preparation process has assumed much of the energies of the commissions. The legislation is more general than previously as to plan content, permitting the use of policy plans. the fact that many of the larger

municipalities have, or will soon have, planning instruments in place has made it mandatory for the regional plan to leave detailed, legalistic control-oriented planning -- at least on "municipal" issues -- to the lower level municipal documents, allowing the regional plan to assume a role of directing and managing growth through ~~broad-brush~~ policies allowing some room for interpretation by the municipalities.



Many municipalities will have in the future, plans, land use bylaws and subdivision approving authority. In limited cases, the RPC will be involved in reviewing subdivisions. Much regional-municipal contact will evolve around the plan conformity question, and the utilization of the special skills of the RPC's to advise and assist the municipal councils on development matters.

Now that municipalities are required to plan, many more will commit themselves to responsibility over the quality of the local environment, and can be expected to develop expertise previously lacking. This interest will enrich the operations of the RPCs, while also requiring them to develop new sensitivities and services.

9. THE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES

Earlier, it was shown that since 1950 there has been a gradual handing down of land use planning function from the Provincial Government to the local level. As a result of this thirty year process, there now exists ten agencies in the Province which have a direct role in regional planning. These include the eight regional planning commissions, the Planning Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs, and the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission.

An Overview of Organizations

The eight regional planning commissions provide planning services to some 250 communities, covering three-fifths of the more densely populated parts of the Province. As an area-wide agency composed of representatives nominated by municipalities from within the region, each commission performs a variety of

functions, including: advising local councils on planning matters; assisting municipalities in the preparation of statutory planning documents; proeessing subdivision applications; liaison with provincial departments and boards, and with other local agencies, and finally, preparing a regional plan to guide the development of the region. (Figure 3).

The Commissions are financed by the Alberta Planning Fund, administered by the Alberta Planning Board. The fund is obtained from a compulsory levy on all municipalities in Alberta, based on a schedule of mill rates which takes into account the differences in sizes of municipalities, and whether or not the municipalities have planning and subdivision approval authority.

A municipality, whether it is served by a regional planning commission or by the Planning Branch of DMA, has clear jurisdiction over local planning and development control matters. A local council, if it is of a certain size, is required to adopt a general municipal plan and a land use bylaw for the purpose of directing the future growth of the municipality and regulating development. It may also adopt an area structure plan or an area redevelopment plan. These documents may be prepared by the council itself, or through the assistance of its regional planning commission or the Planning Branch, DMA. Once adopted, they become local statutory planning instruments, and are required to conform to a regional plan, should it exist.

A substantially different approach to planning is found in the northeast quadrant of the Province where, in recent years, largely in response to major oil sands projects occurring in that area, the Provincial Government has found it both necessary and desirable to set up a special purpose agency known as the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission to coordinate local and provincial activities in that area. Established in 1974, the Commission operates with a broad mandate and very wide-ranging powers under the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission Act, 1974. For example, the Commissioner is empowered to prepare plans, administer and/or implement programs to serve the region; to

Figure 3

Activities and Tasks of the Regional Planning Agencies

1. REGIONAL PLANNING
   a) Adoption and Amendment
   b) Implementation
      - action proposals
      - land use regulations
      - municipal plans
      - coordination mechanisms
      - advocacy policies
   c) Plan Conformancy Activities
   d) Liaison and Coordination
      - municipalities
      - Provincial departments
   e) Review and Evaluation
      - monitoring
      - contingency actions or plans
      - advice to Provincial departments

2. INTERMUNICIPAL DISCUSSION
   a) Leadership
      - coordinate land use development affecting more than one municipality
      - encourage airport regulations
      - encourage, through subdivision responsibility, floodplain controls
      - protection of watershed areas and provision of environmental reserve
      - initiate development restrictions to promote safety standards in areas near sour gas pipelines and installations
      - encourage municipal role in local economic development
      - carry out intermunicipal services studies: e.g. fire, ambulance, library, solid waste

3. INFORMATION FUNCTION
   a) Monitor, e.g.
      - monitor subdivisions and development activity as an indication of how land use decisions are related to changing needs and values
      - monitor the subdivision and development of agriculture land to determine the size of economically viable parcels for regional policy formulation
      - monitor the resources of the region, e.g. gravel and sand
   b) Dissemination of information, e.g.
      - circulate public information documents on population projections, reserve land provisions, regional shopping supply/demand, condominium development
      - circulate an annual report on the region, increasing awareness of regional concerns and initiatives
   c) Public Education, e.g.
      - hold workshops on planning matters, including recreation development agreements, land use bylaws and the role of the RPC
      - hold seminars to explain planning to municipal councils, MPCs and small town administrators
      - prepare synopsis documents for public use
      - circulate newsletters to increase awareness of current activities and planning alternatives
   d) Public Participation, e.g.
      - hold public meetings to describe the purpose of planning initiatives and to receive public input in selected areas
      - conduct surveys and questionnaires to determine the impact of planning alternatives

4. LOCAL ADVISORY SERVICE
   a) Preparation of Municipal Plans and Bylaws, e.g.
      - prepare plans and bylaws upon request from member municipalities
   b) Consulting Services to Municipalities
      - provide advice on the whole range of planning at the local level, including railway relocation, downtown revitalization, urban design, regional recreational facility grants, land banking, utility services, etc.
      - provide statistical information and planning studies to municipalities as requested
      - attend Municipal Planning Commission and other meetings

5. SUBDIVISION APPROVAL
   - administer the subdivision approval process, carry out site inspections and coordinate developments ensuring that they adhere to the regional plan, the general municipal plan and the land use bylaw and meet provincial policies and regulations

6. ADMINISTRATION
   a) Management of RPC, e.g.
      - the RPC organization currently provides services for all statutory responsibilities. In addition, planing resources are allocated to intermunicipal and municipal studies upon request, and on assisting the Province in such matters as aerial photography, regional park planning, coordinating regional water and sewer services and land use planning and regional economic development
   b) Implementation of Provincial Policies and Regulations
      - provincial policy on various matters (e.g. lake management, AUPAs, RDAs) and regulations (such as sour gas) are currently implemented through the subdivision approval process, general plan preparation and regional plan preparation and implementation
   c) Monitoring the Effects of The Alberta Planning Act
      - provides input and assistance to the Department of Municipal Affairs in its monitoring and subsequent amendment of The Planning Act

7. GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL LIAISON
   - ongoing contact is mentioned to provide input to Provincial program planning (e.g. transportation corridor studies

8. PROVINCIAL AGENCY REFERRAL
   - comments on annexation applications referred by the Local Authorities Board; comments on natural gas processing plants referred by the Energy Resources Conservation Board.

coordinate the programs and services of Provincial departments; to seek the advice of a committee of local residents appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs; and to act on behalf of local authorities upon their request, or when directed to do so by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The latter may also make regulations to modify, or exempt the Commission from, the provisions of a dozen pieces of legislation governing local planning and servicing matters, including The Planning Act, 1977.

Major Differences Between Agencies

The present regional planning system has at least three major types of regional planning agencies, as judged by their mandate, organizational structure and functional responsibilities. At one end of the scale is the Planning Branch, DMA, performing largely a technical advisory role, with no formal regional representative body to report to. At the other end sits the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission, which operates more as a regional decision-making body, capable of fulfilling a dual function of planning and delivering programs and services for the region.

In between the two reside that group made up of the regional planning commissions. These organizations are representative of municipalities within their regions, unlike the two other agencies. They perform a technical planning advisory function, such as assisting municipalities in preparing local statutory planning documents, while fulfilling at the same time a rather circumscribed regional land use decision-making and coordination role, through the regional plan, and in their role as regional subdivision approving authorities.

The major differences between these agencies are depicted in Figure 4.

It should be pointed out that although for documentation purposes the Northeast Alberta Regional Commission is included here, the circumstances leading to its establishment were quite unique, and it is generally considered to operate outside the purview of the Planning Act, 1977.

A COMPARISON OF CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES - 1980

Figure: 4.

1979/1980	ERPC	PRRPC	ORRPC	BRRPC	CRPC(1980)	RDRPC(1980)	PRPC	SEARPC	DMA
Budget	$1,498,740	$773,848	$1,050,657	$448,000	$1,552,000	$1,200,000	$192,737	$494,787	$1,279,320
Staff	50	31	34	13	51	34	7	21	47
Regional Population		(1978)							
- Urban	604,976	52,033	99,001	34,823	560,189	82,589	12,288	52,698	128,045
- Rural	76,765	48,024	41,669	27,713	38,037	46,101	10,401	15,385	87,816
Membership									
- Urban	14(+29)	23(+3)	33	29	11(+17)	31(+3)	11	9(+3)	66
- Rural	5	12	8	4	5	6	6	4	17
Budget/Staff	$29,975	$24,963	$30,902	$34,462	$30,431	$35,294	$27,534	$23,561	$27,220
Budget/Population	$2.20 ($9.25)*	$7.73	$7.47 ($11.0)***	$7.16	$2.59 ($23.0)**	$9.32	$8.49	$7.27	$5.93
Budget/Membership	$78,881	$22,110			$97,000	$32,432		$38,061	
Budget/Municipality	$31,223	$20,364	$25,626	$13,576	$47,030	$30,000	$11,337	$30,924	$15,413
Budget/Subdivision Application	$1,555	$1,417	$2,449	$1,062	****	****	$2,141	$2,537	$762

* Exclude population of Edmonton & St. Albert

** Exclude population of Calgary

*** Exclude population of Lethbridge

**** Information not available

The Planning Responses

In order to carry out the statutory responsibilities under The Planning Act, 1977 the regional planning agencies have carved out for themselves essentially seven roles, as follows (See Figure 4):

- regional plannning
- intermunicipal discussion
- information and public education
- local advisory services
- subdivision approval
- administration
- local and Provincial referrals

10. THE PREPARATION OF PRELIMINARY REGIONAL PLANS AND REGIONAL PLANS

The success of regional planning must be judged on the basis of performance on the above seven task areas, rather than by examining the regional plan preparation work by itself, which has only occupied most commissions over the last five to ten years, since the Alberta Planning Fund provided adequate levels of funding.

Nevertheless, it is useful to examine the five preliminary regional plans and the three regional plans submitted for Board approval to develop a general idea as to how RPC's have approached this document in the past, and today.

Factors which most of the preliminary plans have in common:

1) Plan Orientation is largely one of control, and tends towards being prescriptive and rather detailed.

2) Plan Policies are on the whole reactive and relate towards physical land use matters. In some cases this takes the form of a strictly physical focus which concentrates upon setting standards.

3) Plan Format is geared towards the plan being an end product. Most plans contain overtones of land use bylaws and to the extent that this occurs these documents are regulatory.

The above criteria are not uniform throughout all five plans but have been described to highlight what appear to be common elements in the plans prepared before the 1977 Planning Act. These common threads running through the plans exist because of the nature of the act which then existed, an act which saw the regional plan in a very specific role: one which paid great attention to detail, concentrated largely upon physical planning at the local level, and did so in a rigid and rather end-state manner.

Building our general comments on the pre-1978 plans, what similarities exist among those plans produced after the 1977 Planning Act came into being? Did the 1977 Act mark a change in philosophy towards regional plans or was it the continuation of a role which had been performed for a number of years? Using the three criteria used for the pre-1978 plans, (i.e. orientation, policies and format), what statements can be made?

The post-1978 framework suggests that the 1977 Act, when it is fully operating will bring about a change in approach towards the regional plan. The act implies that the plan's focus is to be long range in nature; a guidance document which deals with strategic policy at the regional level. The plan therefore becomes more a process to facilitate change.

Comparing the above statements with the three proposed regional plans which have been submitted to the Board for approval (Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer) the following observations can be made:

1) Plan orientation in general remains geared towards the short term. Specific direction and the need to classify land uses is prevalent.

2) Plan policies take some account of the desirability of approaching growth at a strategic regional level other than a municipal level.

However the plans retain a control philosophy common to the pre-1978 predecessors.

3) Plan format while having moved partially in the direction of combining plan and policy in the same document, still favor the plan as a product of a series of events rather than a process which is constantly the subject of negotiation and change.

Although not all the three proposed plans are alike, the above characteristics apply to a greater or lesser extent. The fact that they *do* appear in these plans argues for a changed way of looking at the role of the regional plan; moving away from the detailed, prescriptive approach inherent in the pre-1978 system, towards a more open, flexible long-range regional guidance tool implicit in the 1978 structure.

11. CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATIONS

The organizational structures and how each agency has responded to the changes imposed upon it is documented in various background materials, so we will not go into any detail here on individual agencies, but will rather draw some comprehensive conclusions about the nature of change.

Elements of Change

As a number of case studies have demonstrated, virtually all of the older RPCs underwent fundamental changes in the way they operated either as a result of the incremental effect of growth or as a result of the new institutional demands made upon them as a result of the Planning Act, 1977. In general, this resulted in a formalizing of goals, as the mandate was perceived to be larger and more complex (Figure 5).

The increased breadth in goals and objectives manifested itself in the production of more, and more sophisticated, products -- lake management plans, regional plans -- and generally increased networks of contacts outside the agencies. The greatest changes were in the structure of the organizations. All increased in size, some over 300 percent in number of staff. With this came an increased specialization and division of labour, and the necessary addition of a layer of managers. The organizational structure went from flat to pyramidal, with a resulting vertical, hierarchical structure of staff relationships. New committees were added at the political level too.

Information handling and financial management systems became more complex; some commissions went to a computerized operation.

Figure 5.

ELEMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
IN REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCIES, 1975-80

Organizational Characteristics

	The Pre-1975 Context	The Post-1975 Context
1. MANDATE & GOALS	• informal goals • mandate narrowly defined	• goals more formalized • broader mandate • answerable to more parties
2. DEMAND & CONTEXT	• subdivisions • plans for municipalities • few Provincial demands • demands relatively simple	• increase in applications • now must do Regional Plan • strong Provincial demands • increased complexity of demands
3. ACTIVITIES & TASKS	• relatively few products • limited contact network	• number and sophistication products increase • activities involve more agencies and outside groups
4. STRUCTURE	• flat organizational structure • relative flexibility & versatility • an "informal climate" • staff tend to be generalist •	• hierarchical & vertical structure: segmenting of tasks • new management strata added • new Commission committees added • formal job design activities; job descriptions, performance appraisals • information & decision systems more complex -- use of computers etc.
5. RESOURCES	• small staff	• financial management formalized • double or triple size of staff • increase in resources ($$)

These changes in the system are fundamental and far-reaching in their impacts, as we shall document later. Some concluding remarks: this change has been characterized by a shift from small, manageable organizations to large, bureaucratized ones. Inter-relatedness between organizations has increased in complexity, and a shift from an essentially reactive to a preactive mode of planning has occurred. The latter is based upon a "predict and prepare" approach using rational and comprehensive tools.

12. PROVINCIAL AGENCIES IN REGIONAL PLANNING

The agencies of the Provincial government play an important and growing role in the regional planning system, through their sectoral program and policy development activities and their participation in the regional plan review and approval process. Cabinet and the Alberta Planning Board fulfill something of a comprehensive, integrative role.

Relationship of Regional Planning to Mandate of Provincial Agencies

The overall responsibilities of the Provincial departments are derived from the legislation establishing them which, in general, directs their tasks and activities towards the provision of services for a particular functional or sectoral area, viz: providing utilities, hospitals, major roads; protecting wildlife and the forests; encouraging economic development; overseeing the operations of business; and so forth.

In the course of delivering these services, the departments will frequently develop policies as to how particular situations are to be handled, or will depend on the practices of their staffs on a day-to-day basis to resolve difficulties when they arise. Less frequently, these guidelines, policies or practices will be part of an integrated, comprehensive examination of a particular sectoral area, as might be found in a plan.

Seldom are these policy and program activities designed to be sensitive to the regional planning system or, for that matter, to the regional nature of the Alberta socio-economy. The regions instituted by a number of departments are administrative tools largely, ways of dividing up the program delivery system so that administrative decisions can be made quickly and efficiently, without recourse to head office in all but the most problematical cases.

Regional planning, as a land use planning and regional development tool, integrates the activities of a number of sectors, in a particular region of the province. Each regional planning agency, therefore, must operate with a broad knowledge of economic, social, environmental and institutional matters crossing the jurisdiction of some two dozen provincial agencies and departments.

Not only must the successful regional planning agency be comprehensive, compared to the specific focus of a provincial department, it must also be sensitive to how a number of sectors taken together impact on particular locations and contribute to the whole regional picture. Regional planning activities are, however, in many ways dependent upon Provincial planning efforts, and to some extent the regional plans (prepared by the regional planning commissions) are having an impact on Provincial department operations. Regional planning commissions request input from the departments in the preparation of their regional plans. Requested input includes articulation of Provincial policies and department priorities and programs.

Provincial departments are directly and individually involved in the review and approval of regional plans. Some Provincial departments recognize the viability of regional plans as a means to implement departmental policy.

The departments individually and collectively impact regional planning through their operations in three areas:

1. resource development, where stimulation is provided to open up new developments, and approval given to ensure that certain Provincial concerns are respected. Some examples: oil sands development; tourism and recreation developments; resource or industrial projects, (coal mining developments, etc.).

2. provision of infrastructure, services and programs i.e. infrastructure such as roadways and related facilities, utilities and power; consulting services such as economic planning; and programs such as water and sewage treatment.

3. conservation of resources; i.e. energy policies; conservation guidelines for lakeshore management; timber management, etc.

Provincial-Regional Policy Development Activities

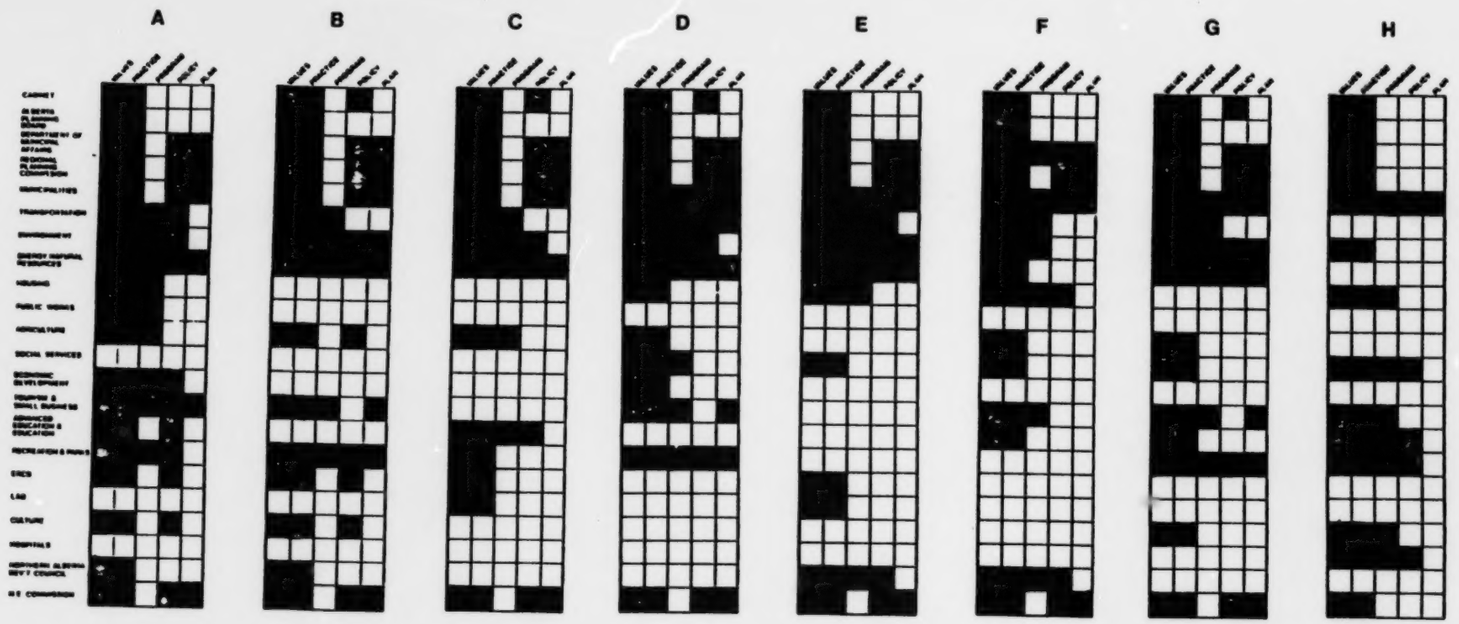
The RPC's and provincial departments interact in a number of important ways related to the development of policy in regional planning. An examination of where these interactions occur, and in what manner, will help us to identify where the strengths and weaknesses occur and where there is room for improved regional policy development.

Provincial activities tend to focus around sectoral or functional areas, and to take the form of program delivery and policy formulation. Some eight areas of overlap with regional planning have been identified, spanning economic development, resource exploitation, environmental management, human services and so forth.

If the policy development process is thought of in terms of *products* and *processes*, the organizations in regional planning could be characterized according to the types of products they produced -- programs, policies, plans, etc. -- and the processes they engaged in (interorganizationally) to produce them -- consultation, negotiation, collaboration, etc. -- thus allowing us to compare, in a very crude way, the level of sophistication of various agencies in a selected areas of interest.

Figure 6 provides a map of how 22 agencies engage in regional planning, indicating the pattern of participation in producing products, and the processes engaged in to produce them, in eight functional areas in regional planning.

Figure 6 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN REGIONAL PLANNING



FUNCTIONAL AREAS

A – ECONOMIC PLANNING & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

B – MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

C – AGRICULTURE

D – TRANSPORTATION

E – UTILITIES

F – SHELTER

G – RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACE

H – HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Summary Observations

Some general conclusions:

1. the patterns of policy development in the regional sphere are complex, with considerable variation between agencies and between functional areas;

2. leadership agencies exist in every area, but there is seldom one predominant actor and almost always, the RPC's as a group play a major role, although individual RPCs may not participate in particular areas;

3. with the exception of human and social services, the RPC's tend to be the most sophisticated agencies in terms of policy development (as defined here), across the functional areas;

4. municipalities, as a group, tend to be quite well developed too, although again, individual ones may be involved only in a limited way;

5. the complexity, the lack of a single predominant leadership agency, and the important parts played by the RPC's and the municipalities underscore the necessity for coordination and for appropriate mechanisms to bring this about. The relatively small roles played by Cabinet and the Board -- at least as evidenced by the data available to us -- suggests that they might have an important, and as yet untapped, role to play in coordination.

13. THE PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE PROBLEMS

During the last three years, the Study team has had detailed and continuing discussions with the staffs of the RPCs, and those Provincial departments involved in land use planning; the two municipal associations were added a year ago. All participant groups consulted so far have been most helpful in identifying problems, issues and concerns, and in suggesting solutions. This and the next section will review these important contributions.

Initial Fifty Issues and Concerns

Some fifty-odd issues and concerns were identified at an early stage in the consultative process, by the RPCs and Provincial departments (Figure 7). Specifically, the commissions expressed a need for clarification of the intent and scope of the regional plan, its legal and functional relationship with other municipal statutory planning documents and provincial policies, and the criteria to be used by the Alberta Planning Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs for reviewing, approving and ratifying the plan, once completed. Similar though less clearly defined concerns were raised by the provincial departments, particularly by those departments which had had limited dealings with the regional planning commissions.

Many of the concerns were addressed through the Board developing and adopting in January 1980 a set of guidelines detailing the intent, scope, preferred approach and format of the regional plan, and the criteria and procedure for its review. However, the experience gained from reviewing several draft regional plans using the adopted guidelines, and some other events that took place in the latter phase of the Study, soon brought to surface a number of other latent problems.

The Issue of the Role of the Regional Plan

At the core of the perceived problems in the regional planning system is the role of the regional plan. It was demonstrated that a substantial number of the existing regional plans (prepared prior to the new Act) and several of the draft regional plans in preparation, followed what might be described as a "control orientation", taking a very detailed, highly prescriptive and more or less legalistic approach in their policy design.

A questionnaire survey by the Joint Working Committee of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties prepared as part of their contribution to the Study process, in 1980, revealed that a considerable number of municipalities -- particularly the rural municipalities -- were in strong disagreement with this control philosophy.

Many local councils viewed some regional plans as being too restrictive and too inflexible for regional and municipal planning purpsoes. There was a feeling of loss of local autonomy in making local planning decisions because of the regulatory nature of some regional plans.

Figure 7

ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF
THE REGIONAL PLANNING SYSTEM PARTICIPANTS

A. The Role of Regional Planning Commissions in General

The following issues have been identified:

A.1 What are the areas of functional responsibility, authority and accountability of the RPCs, beyond those enunciated in the Act?

A.2 Clarify the role relationship between RPC staff and Commission members.

A.3 What is the role of the RPCs with regard to areas of Provincial programs and jurisdiction? e.g. Crown land.

A.4 What is the role of the RPCs in land use planning, economic development, resource management and environmental protection?

A.5 Clarify the liaison function of the RPCs and the Province.

A.6 What is the mandate and ability of the RPCs to implement plans?

A.7 What are the appropriate services that an RPC should provide to its member municipalities? e.g. inter-municipal conflict resolution, etc.

A.8 If the RPCs are to develop land use bylaws for their municipalities, will the Province provide guidance and make additional resources available?

A.9 How is the role of the RPC affected by the size of its jurisdiction? Are there boundary problems?

B. The Role of Regional Planning Commissions in a Metropolitan Region

B.1 What are the respective roles of the Province, the RPCs and the municipalities in metro area planning?

B.2 Clarify the role of the Province and the municipalities in the delivery of services in the metro region.

B.3 Has the uniqueness of the Edmonton metro region been adequately recognized by the Province? Can organizations designed for homogeneous rural areas meet the demands of a heterogeneous, competitive metropolitan area?

B.4 The role of annexation versus other planning and development mechanisms needs clarifying.

B.5 The policy regarding the local autonomy of metro area municipalities needs clarifying. Do some metro area municipalities have more power than others?

B.6 The large cities are inadequately represented on the RPCs.

B.7 There is no adequate forum for resolving inter-municipal conflicts in a metro region. Can the RPC be redesigned to handle this problem?

C. The Relationship of the Regional Planning Commissions to the Province

C.1 Clarify at the Provincial level, the departmental responsibility for various plans. For example: flood management plans, energy development plans, Crown land development plans, etc.

C.2 What are the existing provincial mechanisms for plan, policy or study coordination for land use and resource management purposes?

C.3 Neither the approving authority, the Alberta Planning Board, nor the Department of Municipal Affairs, has a clear mandate to sort out inter-jurisdictional problems and facilitate their resolution.

C.4 Although the Alberta Planning Board reviews the regional land use plan, it does not get involved in regional policy development and review.

C.5 Provincial departments work closely with municipalities in delivering services in specific functional areas, e.g. housing, utility servicing, etc., but often do so without consulting the regional planning commission with regard to regional impact.

C.6 As the effort is being made to strengthen regional planning through The Planning Act, regional decision making continues to be eroded by an increasing centralization of authority in Provincial departments, lessening flexibility for regional representatives to work meaningfully with the RPCs.

D. The Regional Plan Review and Approval Process

D.1 What role does The Planning Act intend the regional plan to play in the development of a region? Does the regional plan provide only for the physical development of a region, or does it provide for the integration of functional planning activities (e.g. economic development, resource planning) in the region?

D.2 The regional plan provides the vehicle for mobilizing land use related policies, and it would appear in the interests of both the RPCs and the Provincial government to mount a coordinated attack on key issues so as to achieve effectiveness and efficiency. To what extent has this vehicle been utilized by the Provincial departments? What should be the mechanism for coordination between regional and Provincial planning processes to ensure policy complementarity?

D.3 Should there be detailed guidance on what a regional plan should cover, given the marked differences between the regions?

D.4 The regional plan is often looked upon as a policy plan. How should policies be defined and expressed in the plan document; what additional material should be included in the plan in support of the policies and how should it be structured; and, in cases where there is a need for coordination between land-use policies and other policies (see D.2 above), how should this be handled in the plan?

D.5 The administrative procedure set out in the Act for plan review and approval leaves some scope for defining the stages and timing of the process, and the roles of the key actors i.e., the RPCs, Provincial department and Alberta Planning Board. Can a process be designed to provide for interim consultations between the actors to secure intergovernmental agreement, thereby facilitating the granting of approval once plans are formally submitted?

D.6 How should a regional plan be assessed, and what criter should be used when judging whether or not to give approval to a regional plan? Can a regional plan be approved by stages?

D.7 Are there sufficient safeguards in The Planning Act to ensure conformance between the regional plan and municipal plans? What additional provisions or measure should be included in the plan or the Act to guarantee conformance?

D.8 To what extent are the policies in a formally approved regional plan binding on the planning appeal decisions of the Alberta Planning Board?

E. The Provincial Planning System

E.1 Is the Board or the Department or are both responsible for planning policy coordination? The relationship and method of cooperation between the two is unclear and should be clarified.

E.2 There is little ongoing consultation between the Board, DHA and the regional planning commissions on major planning policy issues. Some respondants felt that the Board's membership suited it to fulfill a planning policy function, but they recognized that it tended to be bogged down in the appeal function and, furthermore, lacked staff capability to undertake a more aggressive policy role.

E.3 A process or mechanism for resolving inter-jurisdictional planning conflicts was seen as necessary. Examples cited were the problems of planning for Crown land and the difficulties of approving a preliminary regional plan when fundamental differences between the parties occurred.

E.4 Why have the Board and the Department failed to act on those recommendations made by Provincial task forces related to land use and planning policy? There is some concern that this may reflect a lack of commitment to the present Study.

E.5 It was felt by some respondents that it was wrong in principle to substitute the judgement of a panel of senior Provincial civil servants for those of municipal elected officials with regard to planning appeals.

E.6 The conflict between the Board performing a judicial function and attempting at the same time to reflect Provincial government policy and its appeals work was seen as a fundamental problem. It was felt that the advice given by the Board and its staff was on occasion, inconsistent, conflicting and incorrect.

E.7 The policy behind the administration of the Alberta Planning Fund was seen to need clarification. The lack of an equitable formula to determine the funding level of individual commissions was cited as a problem. Present allocations do not necessarily reflect the needs and priorities of a region, the population of the area, or the size of the communities served by the commission.

E.8 A mechanism to monitor and evaluate the performance of the commissions was seen by some respondents as a necessity, in light of the high level of Provincial funding and the continuing requirement for budgetary constraint.

E.9 What role should the Board and/or the Department play in providing "planning advisory services" to the RPCs? The Department now provides some computer support, technical advice on census preparation, statistical analyses, the LANDUP system and other technical support, but this has never been formalized as an ongoing program nor integrated into the budget and program review process of the Board and Department.

F. Planning Philosophy and the Statutory Framework for Planning

F.1 Should the regional planning system be directed at a specific goal area -- economic development, community planning, provincial functional planning, land use planning -- or should it be permissive, allowing a diversity of goals to be addressed? What is planning supposed to accomplish?

F.2 What political commitment is there to the planning system at the Provincial and municipal levels?

F.3 What level of authority should the planning agency have? Are the public safeguards against abuse of this authority adequate? What role does citizen participation play in the system?

F.4 What role do public information and education play in the planning system? Is there a role for the Board and DHA to play in this regard?

F.5 Clarify the legislative mandate and statutory framework within which planning occurs, at each level in the system.

F.6 Under the present diversified planning system does the statutory framework deal adequately with the problems of overlap and conflict between Provincial agencies, and between Provincial agencies and regional planning agencies? Is there need for an improved coordinative mechanism?

F.7 Does the statutory framework allow equitable representation on the regional planning commissions of urban areas, compared with rural areas? What is the Provincial policy on commission membership?

F.8 The relationship of the regional plan to the statutory plans needs clarification. The mechanism for ensuring conformity needs to be elaborated.

F.9 What is the role of the subdivision approval process in the planning system? What governmental level should exercise this power?

F.10 What is the relationship between municipal and regional planning operations? i.e., the relationship of the development control officer to the RPC subdivision approval process.

F.11 Provincial policy has not been expressed in operationally useful terms i.e., "decentralization and balanced economic growth", "preserve farmland", etc.

F.12 When making new demands of the RPCs through altering The Planning Act, should not the Province recognize its responsibility to provide information, guidance and additional resources?

The Issue of Unequal Membership Representation

Controversies over the regional plan have also raised a number of other closely related issues, among which is the issue of unequal membership representation between the urban and rural municipalities on regional planning commissions.

The issue is characterized in most cases by the rural municipalities being concerned about the influence of their urban counterparts who, by virtue of their greater number, can easily outvote them in major land use decisions reached by the commissions.

The concern is aggravated by the requirement in the Planning Act that a 2/3 majority vote will suffice for the adoption of a regional plan. With this requirement, the regional plan could potentially be employed by those municipalities representing the majority interest (frequently the urban interest) of the region to control land use and development in municipalities which are in a minority position. Unequal membership representation between the urban and rural municipalities on a regional planning commission has therefore been a major cause for rural-urban conflict in several regional planning commissions, notably the Calgary, Edmonton and the Red Deer RPC's.

This issue of unequal membership representation is most succinctly summarized in the report of the Joint Working Committee of the AUMA and AAMD&C which states:

> "Representation on the RPCs and the voting pattern of rural and urban members was a source of contention by both. There is a perceived urban domination in the eyes of the rural municipalities, and a small town-rural bias in the eyes of the larger urban municipalities."

Review of the Calgary and Edmonton regional plan preparation process appears to substantiate the point made by the Committee. The experience of the Calgary RPC best reflects the perception of urban domination by the rural municipalities. The experience of the Edmonton RPC, on the other hand, is more of the small town-rural domination phenomenon, which was advanced as a major reason by the City of Edmonton in its bid to annex the surrounding areas.

Concern Over the Delegation of Subdivision Approving Authority to Municipalities

Out of a desire to become more intimately involved in making local development decisions, thereby achieving greater self-determination over future municipal growth, several municipalities, notably the Cities of St. Albert and Lethbridge and the County of Parkland, recently applied to become their own local subdivision approving authorities (SAA's).

Their success has been observed as a disturbing precedent by most regional planning commissions who fear that once the trend is set, a great number of municipalities might be encouraged to apply for subdivision approving authority. The RPC's are opposed to the devolution of SAA for several reasons:

a) they are concerned about the potential impact that might be imposed by the proliferation of a multitude of SAA's on planning coordination at the regional level, particularly if some SAA's have not acquired a suitable level of technical planning expertise for carrying out the subdivision approval function properly.

b) They are also wary of the possibility that a municipality, disagreeing with the RPC, might abuse its newly acquired power to effectively sabotage or circumvent regional plan policy. Serious plan non-conformity problems might occur as a result of a muncipality making decisions on major subdivisions which have regional planning implications in terms of land use, servicing and infrastructure.

c) There is a fear that with more municipalities assuming the status of SAA's, the level of funding made available to the commissions from the Alberta Planning Fund might be reduced, on the one hand,

and that the municipalities might not have been made aware of the cost implications of taking on this new responsibility, on the other; and above all,

d) There is perhaps a basic lack of confidence on the part of most RPC's that, except for the largest urban municipalities, few local councils would be able to reach technically sound subdivision decisions which are unbiased and unfettered by local politics.

Concern Over Potential Plan Non-Conformity

Of all the issues identified so far the one which concerns the RPC's the most is the potential of municipal and provincial policies circumventing, or conflicting with, regional plan policies, and the lack of sufficient built-in safeguards in the planning legislation to prevent this from occurring.

Much of their concern stems from a lack of an unequivocable agreement about the role of the regional plan vis-a-vis municipal and provincial responsibility for growth management.

At the municipal-regional planning level, the Planning Act, 1977 entrenches the regional plan as the superior document in a hierarchy of statutory instruments requiring conformance by all other municipal planning instruments (i.e. general municipal plans, area structure redevelopment plans and land use bylaws). Yet, the Act is silent as to how this may be accomplished. Nor does the Act provide for the referral of municipal planning documents to the RPC's for scrutiny over conformance. The only safeguard that has recently been incorporated into the legislation is an arbitration provision which allows the Alberta Planning Board to settle the disputes once they have been discovered to exist.

The absence of adequate safeguards in the legislation to prevent plan non-conformity from occurring, the existence of a seemingly unreasonable provision in the Act that in making a subdivision appeal decision, the Alberta Planning Board must *conform with* the local land use bylaw, but should only *have regard to* the regional

plan, and a tendency to grant SAA to more municipalities have contributed to a growing concern that potentially more municipalities could be encouraged to circumvent regional plan policies should they disagree with the policies.

Concern Over Coordination Between Regional Planning and Provincial Activities

The concern over the role of the regional plan vis-a-vis Provincial activities is one which focuses on the relationship between Provincial activities which are conducted along functional, sectoral lines and often program specific in nature, and regional planning policies which tend to be comprehensive, land use oriented, and spanning many functional policy areas.

Generally speaking, the RPC's are concerned about the ever increasing influence and visibility of Provincial activities in their region.

They note that with the introduction of more and more programs having an impact on the regional plan, and with the increase in size and number of Provincial departments, the task of coordination has become quite demanding. No longer can they depend on the regional offices of various Provincial departments alone for policy input because, more often than not, high-level policy making is a function centralized in the head-quarters of most Provincial agencies. Meanwhile, they have also been stripped of direct Provincial membership representation on the commissions as a result of a change in the planning legislation.

All in all, the RPC's have found themselves in the difficult position of being forced to react to, rather than plan for, the impacts of Provincial activities. The task is further complicated by a lack of clearly-enunciated policy directions from Provincial departments which can be incorporated into the regional plan, in a suitable manner.

On the other hand, many Provincial departments are aware of the difficulties they sometimes can create for the regional planning agencies by the way in which their programs are delivered. Since the programs are directed mostly at the municipalities, very often consultation is not undertaken to solicit the views of the regional planning agencies. Consequently, the long term priorities of a region may be overlooked, or jeopardized, by the short-term objectives of Provincial programs.

Problems of coordination apply in particular in fields over which no single department has exclusive jurisdiction for policy development or program coordination.

Action has already been taken by the Board in initiating discussions -- within the context of the Study -- between those major departments involved in public lands, an example of an overlapping policy area.

Concern Over the Role of the Alberta Planning Board

Early concerns over the role of the Board tended to focus on three problem areas:

1) that the Board had, from time to time, rendered inconsistent subdivision appeal decisions;

2) that it lacked carefully devised criteria and procedure for the allocation of the Alberta Planning Funds; and

3) that it was overly preoccupied with the appeal and financing functions, to an extent that it had neglected its broader policy development and coordination role.

In response to these comments, the Board has taken several major initiatives. The engagement of a consultant to review the RPC financial accounting procedure and an in-house examination of the Alberta Planning Fund; the development of a set of Regional Plan Guidelines; and the preparation of Provincial guidelines on Rural Industrial Land Use are all indicative of the Board's determination to improve its role as the main agency having an overall responsibility for overseeing the workings of the regional planning system.

Of late, the increasing concern over the role of the regional plan vis-a-vis municipal planning and the related concerns of plan non-conformity, the devolution

of SAA to municipalities, and unequal membership representation on commissions, as well as the problem of coordination with Provincial departments has necessitated an even more active involvement by the Board in the regional plan preparation and review process. In the Calgary Regional Plan review process, for example, the Board performed the role of negotiator, called upon to resolve inter-municipal conflicts.

So far, the increase in the level of Board involvement has been achieved without a corresponding increase in its staff complement, or any major realignment in its structure. There are indications, however, that the Board has reached its limits, so that any further expansion in its role in a major way would require the support of additional staff, and possibly, a reorganization of the Board's committee structure and method of operation in order to achieve greater efficiency and consistency in making decisions.

In addition, there is also a concern over the membership structure of the Board, it being largely made up of representatives from various Provincial departments, involving themselves on a part-time basis. The existing membership composition presents problems of continuity of involvement by members, and possible bias in its performing a conflict resolution role which is more political than technical in nature.

Boundaries and Other Issues and Concerns

In addition to the above six major categories of issues, there are also those others which tend to be more localized, and of concern to only specific commissions. For example, the issue of regional boundaries and size is of particular relevance to the Peace River and Palliser RPCs. In these regions, the sheer distance between communities, and hence the variety of issues involved across the region, requires special attention as to the type and method of delivering planning services to communities.

Apart from these localized issues, there also exists a group of concerns which the municipalities have identified in the questionnaire survey mentioned earlier. These relate to a concern over delays in processing subdivision

applications; a concern that the commissions' subdivision policies are too restrictive; a concern over the level of services and the speed with which they are provided by the RPC's; and finally a concern over the nature of the Provincial role in the regions and the methods of intervention of Provincial departments.

The above concerns appear to suggest that, overall, there is a lack of understanding of the role of the RPC's and how they operate. For example, it has been pointed out by the Directors that often local councils raise issues with the subdivision approval process because they do not appreciate that many of their perceived problems are extraneously imposed upon the RPC by the Provincial departments. Likewise, they pointed out that many of the restrictions they place upon the subdivision applicants are not those of the commission, but are required by the numerous Provincial regulations.

Whatever the explanations are, the fact that municipalities have expressed these sorts of concerns raises a broader question relating to the level of public understanding of the role of the RPC's, their relationship with Provincial agencies, how various planning instruments and processes operate, and so forth. To bridge this knowledge gap may call for a major public education effort in these areas.

The question of metropolitan planning and the relationship of the central cities of Edmonton and Calgary to their RPCs has been a persistent one, as a number of private and governmental studies have attested to. While this subject was outside the specific terms of reference of the the Study -- as revised -- some thought has been given to the role of the RPCs in metropolitan planning and will be dealt with later in this report.

14. PARTICIPANT SUGGESTED SOLUTION

In response to the problems and concerns outlined in the last section, the actors themselves have each put forth their own suggestions for problem resolution, based on their own perceptions as to which problems are the most critical, from their own experience. The major ones are described below.

Suggestions of Provincial Agencies

They generally see the lack of policy coordination as a problem at all levels, and view improved coordination as an answer to many of the problems so identified. Thus, they see a need for the Alberta Planning Board to play a more active role in policy coordination and for a more effective utilization of the Regional Plan Review and Approval Process to bring about better information exchange, and policy integration with the RPC's.

Suggestions of Municipalities

Though many municipalities are not unhappy with the present form of regional planning and the level of services they receive from the RPC's, for those who are disgruntled with RPC's and regional planning, for whatever reason, they desire that:

1. the RPC's be made only *advisory* planning bodies,

2. the regional plan should likewise be only a *guidance* document,

3. they should receive speedier and higher levels of planning services from the commissions; and,

4. there should be a review of commission membership and the basis of representation to achieve more parity between the rural and urban municipalities.

The above suggestions -- mostly undetailed -- are reflected in the "Municipal Attitudes" report of the Joint Working Committee of the two municipal associations. In recent months, largely as a result of rising tensions and growing frustrations on the part of some rural municipalities with the regional plan programs of at least two RPC's, they have advanced a drastic proposal that consideration should be given to the formation of rural RPC's, separate from the present PRC's, which they view as urban dominated.

Suggestions of the RPC Directors

Through the RPC Director's *Task Force on Regional Planning*, the Directors have put forth some twelve general recommendations which they publically presented to the Board at the April, 1981 Jasper Conference. These are listed below in summary:

1. the role of the RPCs should be clarified;
2. eight major roles should be recognized;
3. coordination role of RPCs should be strengthened;
4. RPCs should retain their organizational autonomy;
5. relationships between the various planning instruments should be clarified;
6. inconsistencies between municipal and regional plans should be resolved by the Board through the regional plan review process;
7. nonconformity problems should be resolved by the RPCs and, failing that, the Board;
8. there should be no further delegation of SAA until Board has done a comprehensive review of the impacts;
9. criteria for delegation of SAA should be established;
10. each RPC should arrange its own relationships with new SAA's;
11. clarify planning relationships on public lands;
12. the Board should "provide appropriate leadership in the conduct of its duties".

Many of the Provincial and municipal suggestions have been addressed either directly, through specific recommendations, or indirectly through other changes in the system. Virtually every recommendation made by the Task Force of regional planning commission Executive Directors has been addressed by the recommendations which follow.

15. FUTURE DEMANDS ON THE SYSTEM

The Future: Organizational Turbulence in Society

Our examination of the possible futures facing regional planning has been a departure from the standard projection of economic and social trends, or scenario-building around the detailed nature of possible societies in the future. We have instead relied on a group of organizational, scholars and practitioners whose work has focussed on how institutional systems have developed and can be expected to develop in the future.

This approach is a strategic one: estimating particular "growth" or "no-growth" scenarios is time consuming and expensive (cf. the Club of Rome reports), and the results are often highly questionable; whereas, there are clear pathways of organizational change which permit us to predict some of the human, institutional changes ahead.

Examining the developments in Western, industrialized societies, these scholars have noted the following trends as characteristic of the next phase in our social and institutional development:

1. the sheer growth in organizational size and concentration of power;
2. the growing interdependence between all sectors of society;
3. the harnessing of technologies in pursuit of competitive organizational power;
4. the revolution in communications and information flow which decreases response time but expands impacts; and
5. the increasing bureaucratization in large organizations.

Recent Turbulence in the Planning System

It is perhaps axiomatic to observe that the next decade is before our eyes now, if we but observe closely enough. Our analysis of recent planning system elements of change suggests some of the factors which may be important in the years ahead.

The evolution of regional planning, and the role of the RPCs in it, has been characterized by shifts in power, from one level to the next (i.e. the subdivision approval authority); an increase in responsibilities over time (becoming broader); the growth in power (from advisory bodies, to those having authority over developmental decisions in some, then all municipalities); and an increasingly complex environment, in which more agencies want a voice, and more factors impinge on any one decision.

As dramatic as the planning system changes were, the alterations to the way the regional planning agencies conducted their own business, internally, were of particular note. We documented the shift from small, generalist "flat organizations" to large hierarchical, specialized organizations, with increasingly complex outside contact patterns. Nevertheless, our analysis of relationships between Provincial and regional organizations throughout the eight functional areas in regional planning indicated that these were at only a rudimentary stage of development, in general, and would require considerably more effort if the implications of the 1977 Act were to be fully implemented.

Our analysis of the changing environment within which the commissions operate suggest that they will be required to develop new organizational responses to cope with the new demands being placed upon them, and that some of the recent trends are indicative of future conditions.

Future Turbulence in Planning

Translating the above major change parameters into terms relevant to regional planning, we obtain the following elements:

1. organizations doing planning will become larger, and will together be more powerful through being involved in more areas of decision-makers.

2. planning agencies will become more interdependent, because

   a) *issues are complex and interrelated, with no clear causality.*
   e.g. the regional plan has, in some instances, become associated with issues such as rural-urban conflict, commission membership representation, the devolution of subdivision approving authority to municipalities and so on. And yet, it is not so clear as to how these issues in fact relate to one another.

Since essentially the same set of actors were responsible for, or involved in the preparation, adoption and approval of the regional plans, it begs the question as to why the previously adopted documents went unchallenged while the present generation of draft regional plans have been subjected to adverse criticisms from all sides. What accounts for the different levels of acceptance?

b) *many problems are interorganizational in nature, crossing jurisdictions*
e.g. regional planning is, by definition, a multi-functional activity embracing many provincial and municipal areas of jurisdiction, in addition to the "purely" regional. The Board recognizes for example, that regional plans "provide a vehicle for interpreting Provincial policy at a regional level", that the process of plan preparation must "encourage the identification of areas where municipal policy supports or conflicts", and that there ought to be policy "to meet the needs for coordination between the regional planning commission, the Provincial government and local authorities and boards" (Regional Plan Guidelines).

c) *typical of most complex problems, the shape, scope and magnitude of the issues and concerns have changed over time, and their problem focus has shifted as a result of a combination of factors.*
e.g. The introduction of new problem dimensions; a deeper understanding of the issues involved; an improved appreciation by the participants of each other's perspective on certain issues; and so on, have all had a role in modifying the perceptions of the agencies.

An example of this: in reviewing the regional plans and preliminary regional plans adopted prior to the introduction of the Planning Act, 1977, it is evident that some of the earlier plan documents were just as narrow in scope and no less restrictive or prescriptive in content than are some of the draft regional plans being contemplated in the last two years. Yet, interestingly enough, few of the previous documents generated as much controversy and heat as have the more recent draft regional plans.

3. planning agencies will, of necessity, become more sophisticated in both "hard" (video, computer, etc.) technologies, as well as "soft" (decision-making), programming, etc.), in order to keep pace with competitive organizations (developers, interest groups, etc.);

4. planners will be subject to demands for more, faster and open communication of information; the desire among users to know the "why", "how" and "when" associated with planning decisions will stimulate new approaches to information and public education; more and more will expect a say in decisions affecting their lives;

5. the increased bureaucratization of planning organizations will stimulate new means of dealing with key decision-makers, mustering staff resources, and managing both people, technologies and facilities, in the interests of "flattening" or crossing the pyramidal organizational structures associated with bureaucracies.

These trends affecting the planning organizations will necessitate the Alberta Planning Board playing a leadership role in monitoring change and making adjustments to it a regular part of its mandate, to be reflected in the way it approacnes policy development, its programmatic activities and the way it utilizes the Alberta Planning Fund.

16. ORIENTATION BEHIND THE ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Balancing of Viewpoints

The recommendations detailed below are the result of a process of balancing what each of the participant groups has recommended, on the one hand; comparing these to the Provincial interest, on the other; and evaluating all viewpoints with respect to the expected future demands on the system. The recommendations put forward at this point are, therefore, attempts at a compromise between these important viewpoints on regional planning.

While it is recognized that all viewpoints cannot be satisfied -- indeed, some are antipathetic -- it is hoped that in the course of discussions over the next few months the major points of disagreement can be explored and accommodations reached on a majority of positions.

The Contribution of Regional Planning

Although planning in broad terms has been a tool of government for seventy years in Alberta, regional planning has only established the importance of its contribution in the last three decades. Urban sprawl, loss of the best farmland and environment degradation would be much more serious problems today were it not for the conscientious work of the regional planning commissions in controlling land use developments through the tools of planning, zoning, and subdivision approvals. Looked at in the broadest perspective, that the Alberta urban and rural environments have been planned in a generally careful and thoughtful way, must be attributed to the operations of the many planning agencies, among which the RPC's play a leading role.

It is the view of the Study that regional planning has, in the past, served the needs of Albertans well, ensuring that municipalities and individuals benefit from generally high quality of development in their communities. Without this past contribution by dedicated commission members, and staff, the growth pressures which continue to pose problems across the Province would be much less susceptible of solution than they now are, and the future would be less rosey.

A Changing Environment

Nevertheless, changes are occurring which require that the system take measures to consolidate the best within it, and eliminate those aspects which may have been workable in the past, but which in recent years have proven to be troublesome and unworkable. Municipalities are now seeking to shoulder a larger burden of responsibility for land use planning and implementation decisions. The Province is playing an expanded role, not only through the increased interest in planning displayed by a number of departments of the Provincial Government, but also through the leadership role which the Alberta Planning Board is now beginning to assume. Individual citizens are becoming concerned about issues integral to the planning system -- energy, farmland and preservation, quality of life -- and are asserting this concern through various increasingly vocal interest groups. These, and other changes have begun to place considerable stress on the RPC's and other system participants. It is the view of the Study that the Provincial Government has a responsibility to ameliorate these pressures, and to ease the passage from the pre-1977 to the new framework.

Changes Already Initiated

Quite important changes have occurred since the initiation of this Study, and the extended process of consultation associated with it. A substantial number of the initial fifty issues or concerns have been eliminated, either by new procedures or processes, or because they are no longer seen as issues or problems by the participants.

The development of a regional plan review and approval mechanism as a means of coordinating Provincial department inputs to the Board; The Board's Guidelines on Regional Plans, and the Rural Industrial Land Use Policy are significant new initiatives by the Province. The concerted efforts by the executive directors of the regional planning agencies to assist the Board in its

development of Study recommendations, and the heightened interest shown by members of several commissions in such questions as membership, attest to the development of a healthy self-analysis among the most important components in the system. At the municipal level, there has been an increased interest in discussing and attempting to resolve those issues which have surfaced as a result of the regional plan preparation process, and the Study itself.

Agents of Change

The Study strongly favours the continuation of these processes of change, and encourages the participants themselves to work together to identify and resolve matters of common concern. Staff recognizes, however, that the Board has a role to play in stimulating changes which will build on the existing strengths of regional planning, while better preparing for the future demands which are sure to develop.

Changes to the Planning Act will be required to put in place particular mechanisms now lacking; reorientations of priorities will be needed; and new behaviours will be encouraged at all levels in the system. These changes are viewed as necessary to fulfill the new directions suggested by the Planning Act 1977 and its amendments, and to allow the important gains of recent years to be consolidated and strengthened to meet the future demands.

Toward Shared Solutions

The regional planning system has been examined from the point of view that it is a collection of agencies or **actors** working more or less together, to ensure that the regional community is planned and developed in an appropriate manner. The key idea is that it is *participational* requiring the interaction of a number of different actors, who share a particular set of values and interests, to ensure that their actions are mutually reinforcing rather than conflicting.

It would, therefore, be inappropriate to think in terms of "right" or "wrong", and certainly unproductive to design solutions which acted to effectively exclude any major participant from the proposed arrangements. As surely as no group or individual holds a monopoly on truth or wisdom, every one in the regional planning system has a contribution to make in designing a more effective system.

It follows, therefore, that no set of proposed arrangements should have the effect of alienating any major group of participants to such an extent that working relationships with participants would be made untenable.

While there are no "right" or "wrong" ways to do regional planning, only appropriate or less appropriate ways, all participants can look to the Planning Act and its amendments as a touchstone or frame of reference against which to judge the relevancy of their actions or values.

17. THE ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analyses and recommendations will follow the order in which the participant - identified issues and concerns were discussed earlier; that is:

- role of the regional plan: its relationship to municipal interests;
- unequal membership on commissions;
- delegation of subdivision approval authority;
- potential plan non-conformity;
- coordination of regional planning and provincial activities; and
- role of the Alberta Planning Board.

Role Of The Regional Plan

The manner in which planning has evolved in Alberta points to the inevitability of the regional plan as an important instrument in the toolbox of government and in the management of change and development. Our analysis of the forces of change and the way they have shaped the regional planning system during the last ten to fifteen years underlines the necessity to put in place a set of regional plans which deal, in an appropriate manner, with the new forces at work in the organizational environment.

Purpose of the Plan

A regional plan is generally conceived as a tool for managing change and development in a region, through indicating in policy statements, and other tools, the intended actions the planning agency will take when particular circumstances arise in the future. Most regional plans, in other jurisdictions, seek to direct growth, to stimulate development, to encourage the best uses of land and community resources, in the fullest sense of the term. That is to say, a regional plan performs a leadership role, indicating to the public, development industry, individual municipalities and the senior governments how the municipalities, acting collectively through the regional planning agency, intend to manage growth and change.

Our review of existing preliminary and draft regional plans indicates that the RPC's have yet to fully embrace the notion that the regional plan performs a leadership role, that its primary purpose is to guide growth and manage development at a regional scale, and that, it should serve as a guide to municipal and other decision-makers. When that is accomplished the regional plan can then be seen to serve the purpose of creating a climate in the development industry, among municipal governments, or in the public-at-large, aimed at stimulating positive attitudes towards the whole area of stewardship over the land and the development of better designed and more liveable communities.

Recommendation

1(a) The Study recommends that the Board, through its review and approval of regional plans, act to establish the regional plan as a leadership document, designed to bring about a high quality in the regional environment and to enhance the quality of life of the region's inhabitants, through the management of growth and change.

1(b) The plan should, therefore, be simply written, in non-technical language easily comprehended by the layman, and should be in a format serving the needs of the various plan users.

Guidance to Municipalities

The average municipality typically plans for and manages its future, with a desire to capitalize on the perceived benefits of industrial development (e.g. a larger tax base, more population more political influence, more community services, etc.) while seeking to provide the required municipal services at minimum cost to its citizens. In many ways, this dual objective is a reaction to the constraints imposed by the present system of municipal finance, which is based on an inelastic property tax system, supplemented by provincial grants of various kinds, with or without strings attached.

A municipality which is determined to pursue a growth orientation will want to have a great deal of freedom and discretion in deciding what policies to include in the general municipal plan and land use bylaw so as to maximize the development potential. It will not favour restraints imposed by its regional planning agency, either by way of the subdivision approval process or through the regional plan, which it perceives may have the effect of limiting its growth options, or reducing its ability to compete with other municipalities in the region for provincial grants.

It is out of the competition for growth and for provincial grant monies that some of the most contentious inter-municipal disputes have developed. And these battles are fought mostly around the forum of the regional plan because, with the plan conformance requirement in the planing legislation, the regional plan has the potential to be used as an instrument for allocating growth derived from industrial and commercial development among the region's municipalities, through the inclusion of a regional growth strategy, the designation of land uses, and through provisions governing the subdivision of land, etc. in the plan.

Recommendation 2. The Study endorses the principle that the regional plan is primarily a policy document for the management of regional growth and change, forming the framework for guiding similar municipal efforts.

Inter-Municipal Competition

Under the present arrangements, the regional planning system becomes the battle ground for what are essentially fiscal matters perhaps more appropriately handled through tax sharing, grants aimed at low or no-growth areas, and so on. By its very nature, planning involves judgements of an allocational sort -- housing here, industry there -- which obviates everyone sharing in every type of growth, with the inevitable result that some communities share less of the increment than others.

Recommendation 3. The Study recommends that the Board, as part of its role vis-a-vis the planning system encourage the Government to find ways of reducing intermunicipal conflicts over tax resources, through tax sharing regionally grants to communities and so on, so that good regional planning is not jeopardized by what is essentially a fiscal problem.

Whether "essentially" a fiscal problem or not, regional divisiveness has taken the form of bloc-voting on regional plans and other matters, in addition to introducing aberrations in the regional plan itself. This raises a fundamental question relating to the plan's purpose: is good regional planning served bya "majority rules" approach to passing a regional plan, or should some more consensual approach be found; and is the present membership representation method viable in light of the urban rural polarization occurring in some regions? We will attempt to deal with this below, under the membership question.

To the extent that some of this conflict stems from the regional plan *removing* the prerogatives of some municipalities, rather than constraining them in the interests of the regional community, there can be said to be a problem with the form and goal of some regional plans. One way of addressing this is through a clear recognition of the proper role to be played by the instruments at each level in the hierarchy of planning instruments. This will be discussed below.

Provincial Policy as a Guide

Another way is for the Provincial government to assume its role in developing policy on those issues which are of wide, inter-regional concern, such as industrial location, economic decentralization, country residential development, presentation of farmland, and so on. Steps have been taken recently to protect lakes, and to give guidance on the location of industrial development in rural areas.

Recommendation 4. The Study urges the Board to continue and to strengthen its role in development of policy on matters vital to regional planning and to do this in collaboration with the RPC's and the affected Provincial agencies.

Stimulation of Economic Development

Other jurisdictions have used the regional plan as a tool to encourage industry and development, and as a means of guiding development into the most suitable locations once the locational decision has been made. This approach would have application especially in those regions in Alberta suffering from slow or no-growth (i.e. Palliser and South East), or in regions where a diversification of the economic base was desired (i.e. Peace River).

Recommendation 5. a) The Study recognizes the distinct differences between regions, and the necessity in some regions to stimulate growth and to maximize growth opportunities. It encourages the use of the regional plan to stimulate regional economic development, and suggests that the Board lend its support to those regions wishing to adopt this approach.

b) Since regional economic development is broader than the traditional land use planning usually associated with regional plans, it will be a necessary strategy for RPAs using this approach to encourage the fullest cooperation from Provincial departments involved in economic development matters. (i.e. Small Business and Tourism, Economic Developments, and Energy and Natural Resources). Staff recommends that the Board lend its offices to Regional Planning Agencies wishing to undertake this approach to regional planning.

Relationship to the Hierarchy

Many criticisms of regional planning can be traced to structural problems with the regional plan's role, because the plan does not respect the hierarchy of planning instruments as laid down in the Act. Several of the recent draft regional plans take the form of hybrid documents, overlapping with detailed local planning instruments.

It may be argued that such hybrid documents had their place in the pre-1978 period when local instruments were lacking or inadequate. It is questionable, however, whether the present reality still calls for the plan to take this approach now that most communities have some statutory planning documents in place and others are rapidly assuming this responsibility.

Recommendation 6. a) The Study believes that it is important that the Board emphasize that the regional plan is the supreme document under the Planning Act, with a particular role in the hierarchy of planning instruments.

b) In order to achieve this, the Board is urged to recommend changes to Section 105(2) of the Act which requires the Board to be bound in appeals by the land use bylaws.

Recommendation 7. The Study urges the Board to re-affirm its commitment expressed in its guidelines for regional plans, that the regional plan should be a document sensitive to both provincial and municipal concerns, along with regional perspectives, to produce workable policies guiding development in the region.

Scope of Plan

The origins of the regional plan having been linked closely, for organizational purposes, with the sub-division approval process. As effective as that may have been in the past, it no longer serves the intended purpose now that many more actors have entered the planning field, seeking greater responsibilites in the decision making process, and responding to heightened expectations about the role to be played by planning.

A regional plan which assumes both the local and regional planning role, risks striking an unsatisfactory balance between the two with the result that its scope may be inappropriate. The majority of plans prepared under both the old and the new Act fit into this category, sacrificing broad sweep for detailed site-specific policies. It appears that part of the concerns expressed by the municipalities as well as the Provincial departments through the Alberta Planning Board's regional plan review process, are aimed at this imbalance in some of the recently completed draft regional plans.

Recommendation 8. The Study recommends that the Board emphasize in its regional plan review work that the regional plan is to be a document integrating both municipal and Provincial concerns, at a regional-level focus, without intruding upon either municipal or Provincial levels in the hierarchy.

Most plans reviewed are not sufficiently comprehensive to act as a useful guide to regional growth. Further, we noted that all regional plans taken together manage to cover virtually all eight functional areas comprising regional planning but the reality is that very few plans cover all eight jurisdictional areas.

While the Act -- unlike its predecessors -- does not enumerate the functional areas a regional plan must cover, preferring to leave this to the planners' discretion, the fact that the plan must be approved by the Alberta Planning Board (on which are represented most Provincial departments) and must be ratified by the Minister (who presumably might be expected to judge it by the broadest of Provincial interests), suggests that anything but a comprehensive document would be inappropriate.

The Study feels that the RPC's have a unique role to play in this regard. As early pioneers in the planning field, with a proven track record of concern for the development of a quality environment, they have a responsibility and an opportunity to play a leadership role in the broader community.

In order to do this, the regional plan should become more comprehensive in the functional areas it covers; it should begin to deal with those issues on the cutting edge of the community; and it should do these in a positive, direct and forward looking manner.

Recommendation 9. a) The Study believes that the Board should insist upon the regional plan being framed in comprehensive terms, as a policy document covering the eight functional areas (identified earlier), and involving policy input from Provincial departments.

b) The Board should encourage Provincial departments to utilize the regional plan review and approval process as an opportunity to identify their regional interests and to develop, in collaboration with the RPA's, regionally-sensitive policies, for integration into the regional plan.

c) The Study believes that although the primary responsibility for inputting Provincial concerns into the regional plan should most properly lie with the RPA's and the departments concerned, it recognizes that the Board can perform a leadership role in stimulating and facilitating such communication and, therefore, recommends that the Board formally endorse this role and make staff available on a continuing basis to perform this function.

With both the Provincial and municipal levels in the hierarchy assuming increasingly important roles in the planning process, the RPA's will be called upon to give advice and provide guidance, but to do so in a consulting as opposed to a directing mode. This will place a premium on negotiating and conciliation skills, and will require that the plan itself have flexibility built in so that the various parties to it have some manoeuvering room. While this approach may not be "new" in the sense that it is not unknown in commission operations, the fact that it will need to be a much more prevalent type of behaviour gives it special importance, and warrants our comments on it here.

Recommendation 10. a) The Study believes the Board should endorse the concept of the regional plan as a flexible, policy document, serving as the focus for continuous discussion and negotiation between the RPA, the Provincial departments, and the municipalities.

b) The Board is encouraged to assist the RPA's in developing the appropriate processes and mechanisms to allow negotiation on a continuous basis; and to undertake the necessary training programs that will be required for RPA and municipal staff to develop appropriate skills in negotiation and facilitation.

The Study recognizes that regional planning is now in a transitional period, with some RPC's and municipalities acting within the "new" paradigm, while others are still coping with "old" one. The difficulties in making the shift from the old to the new framework are quite real and, in many cases, valid expressions of local and regional views on regional planning.

While it is desirable to encourage as rapid a shift in how planning is done as possible, within the limits of resources and administrative capacities, through the Provincial exercise of leadership and the provision of guidance, Staff assistance and resources, it would be viewed by this Study as counter-productive to force change or to insist upon it within a perhaps unnecessarily short period of time.

Relationship of the Regional Plan to Municipal Planning

Municipal planning has a critical role in ensuring the success of regional planning, since it is within the purview of each municipal government to decide upon the details of development which will 'put on the ground' the broad land uses specified in the regional plan. While the Planning Act requires the general municipal plan and land use bylaw to conform to the regional plan, it also implies that each has an appropriate sphere of interest in which it has pre-eminence.

In theory these interests maybe defined by the way in which land uses are categorized, being grouped in the regional plan in terms which allow for discretion at the municipal level, or by the generality of the regional policies permitting variation in interpretation at the municipal.

General municipal plans are accorded, under the Planning Act, 1977, the responsibility for interpreting at the local level the broad, general policies of the regional plan, and putting these into practice through the land use bylaw and other municipal actions.

Recommendation 11. a) The Study recommends that the Board investigate means by which municipal instruments can be developed in conformity with the regional plan, and both modified in cases where the municipal instruments predated the regional plan, through discussions with the affected parties and preparation of relevant guidelines to assist both parties.

b) Recognizing the special responsibility of municipalities to ensure that developments are approved in accordance with high standards and proper procedures, ensuring fair treatment to applicants, staff encourages the Board to recommend amendment to the Planning Act to require that Direct Control District provisions in land use bylaws be established only when criteria are in place in the local statutory plan(s) as to how they are to be employed, and staff exists at the municipal level to exercise the discretion inherent in this instrument.

c) The Study recommends that the Board develop guidelines, similar to its regional plan guidelines, to assist RPA's and municipalities in the formulation of policies appropriate to each level, and in conformity with the regional plan.

Unequal Membership on Commissions

As noted earlier, the question of membership on the commissions has tended to be seen as a problem in association with the development of a regional plan. The necessity to develop regional policies for managing growth, as part of plan preparation, has brought municipalities to a position where they must consider their growth prospects and those of their municipal neighbours, and make judgements in the interest of the broader regional community.

Competition for Growth

Frequently, the competition for growth has overcome a municipality's dedication to the principle of regional community, and bloc voting by those of like views has resulted in polarization, and an unwillingness to compromise on a growth strategy to which all could give their approval. Often this trend has been aided and abetted by policy formulations which, because of their

high degree of specificity, lack the flexibility of interpretation which could encourage agreement, at least among those in the grey area between the two poles.

Unequal membership representation has given rise, in some cases, to a situation in which the region's municipalities are aligned along a rural/urban interests line, or a metropolitan city/rural-town interests line.

The dynamics of the political process at the regional planning level may therefore encourage, through a 2/3 majority vote, the adoption of a regional plan containing regional growth strategies and subdivision policies which conflict with the interests of those municipalities -- frequently the rurals -- which are in the minority position.

While the Study does not view the above problem as a widespread one, (as it presently only seems to apply to several of the eight regional planning commissions), it is concerned that if solutions are not quickly developed it may become a snowballing problem which may work to reduce the overall effectiveness of regional plans. Indeed, recent interest by some minicipalities in assuming the authority for subdivision approval has the appearance of being linked to this issue.

The Search for a Formula

Since problems and policy interests vary from area to area, and the population and geographic variables display considerable variation, developing a universal formula to give interest groups a 'fairer' opportunity through increased representation, appears doomed to failure. Furthermore, the present representation pattern already displays a weighting to support the small municipalities interests over the larger, looked at province-wide.

The heart of the problem seems to be the operation of the "majority wins" principle, when it acts to consistently exclude a particular block or class of membership. While this principle works well elsewhere, it only works well for an extended period of time if the majority respects the rights of the minority. Hence, if this democratic principle operates in a "win-lose" fashion, it seems clear that the policy direction of an RPC will reflect the interests of the majority. Therefore, whether commissions are rural- or urban- oriented will determine the extent to which the RPC -- and the regional plan -- is supportive of or opposed to rural industrialization, decentralization, country residential, community development, and a host of other important regional issues.

Both Urban and Rural Essential to Regional Planning

When the nature of regional planning is examined, it is apparent that a consistently urban-rural dichotomy will be disastrous to the integrated planning for the whole region which, since it is composed of both people and land, cannot develop without both being carefully considered together. Actions taken in either area have an influence on the other, and on the overall welfare of the region.

Use of the Instruments

The solution would seem to lie with the instruments, rather than an attempt to alter the basis of membership which, while it may solve the interest-group problem in one region, is not amendable to a province-wide formula. One approach is to structure an instrument which affects both groups more or less equally; that is, a standard for what developments are regional, which would then be applied to both urban and rural municipalities, in the appropriate plans and bylaws.

Another approach would be to require that the regional plan be a consensus document, with each interest group in effect having veto power on the other.

It is the view of this Study that no single formula, incorporating both land and population-representation principles, applied Province-wide, would resolve satisfactorily the problems identified in those commissions for which this is an issue, without creating unintended and unwanted difficulties in other commissions. The interest of the Province would seem to be that the regional plan be developed in such a manner that all relevant interests are reflected in it; that the operations of the RPC's be in accordance with accepted principles of fairness and through relevant procedures; and that the RPC's continue to enjoy a measure of autonomy over their own operations, taking into account the variation between regions and the different interests from area to area, and time to time.

Recommendation 12. The Study recommends that the Act be changed so that the regional plan or regional plan amendments must receive a simple majority from both its urban and its rural municipal members in order to be adopted by the commission.

The Task Force has pointed out that such a structural change may bring about the very thing it was designed to prevent: rural-urban polarization. The Study now believes, especially in light of the recent Edmonton annexation and Calgary regional plan decisions, that it may be possible to effect the same result by a simple Board policy statement, rather than by structural changes.

Recommendation 13. The Study recommends that the Minister entertain submissions from the commissions, recommending restructuring of commission membership. Such submissions would be required to show that the proposed membership representation formula or structure took account of the following principles, which are deemed to be of importance to the Provincial Government; namely:

1. *representation by population-size of municipality*
2. *representation by land area of municipality*
3. *no actively participating municipality should lose its representation; and*
4. *interest groups and blocs should have opportunity to participate in and influence de-decision-taking, through membership representation, to the extent possible, or through committee membership, or in some other manner.*

Delegation of Subdivision Approval Authority

Only in the last few years has the devolution of the subdivision approval authority (SAA) become as issue of concern to the municipalities and the commissions. Certainly, from an historical perspective it is a responsibility which the Provincial Government has felt free to delegate when circumstances warranted, and the current controversy can be viewed as a debate over whether the present moment is appropriate.

There is some indication that the desire to obtain SAA has arisen municipally as a function of two things: an increasing interest in fulfilling the local responsibility to plan (which was stimulated in many instances by the mandatory provisions of the Act that municipalities adopt general municipal plans and land use bylaws) and as a reaction to the perception that a number of regional plans intrude upon municipal prerogatives. It is not inconceivable, however, that as the regional plans become more flexible with policies framed in more appropriate terms, the desire to circumvent the plan through attaining SAA may well disappear; nevertheless, the desire to undertake this responsibility as part of local government will remain and, in our view, ought not to be discouraged, on principle.

Most of the concerns that have arisen over the issue of devolution of subdivision approving authority to municipalities have centred on the ability of local communities to perform this function competently and judiciously so as not to compromise good regional planning principles, and on the potential negative effect that this may have on the financial support to the regional planning commissions.

The Study believes that subdivision approval is essentially a municipal planning responsibility. That being the case, it is a logical development that those municipalities which have acquired the technical capability, are prepared to put up with the additional costs involved, are willing to observe closely the legislative procedures for the processing of subdivision applications, and regional planning principles, should be permitted to assume this responsibility.

That most regional planning commissions have performed this role successfully, in the past, and to the satisfaction of the majority of its members is a good reason for them to continue with this role on behalf of those municipalities which have neither the resources nor the desire for undertaking this function themselves.

This is not, however, an effective argument for discouraging a municipality which has both the required resources, willingness and technical capability, from assuming this role. In fact, an argument can be made that since subdivision approval is essentially a local planning function, it is the municipality which is in a more knowledgeable position to administer the subdivision approval process, to exercise whatever discretion is allowed under the Planning Act and other available statutory plans (including the regional plan), and to be made accountable for its own actions.

The Planning Act, 1977 has recognized the potential of more municipalities aspiring to become their own subdivision approving authority, once they have adopted adequate planning controls, and it has responded accordingly by making it easier for this to occur.

Recommendation 14. The Study endorses the principle that subdivision approval authority is essentially a local responsibility, logically a part of the development approval and planning process now being discharged by municipal authorities. As municipal government fully assumes its role in local planning -- through the general municipal and other local plans -- and in approving development applications -- under the land use bylaw -- it is an entirely proper wish for the municipality to exercise SAA, one which in principle the Board should support.

Need for Criteria for Devolution

The above statement should not, however, be construed as the Study endorsing the granting of subdivision approval to each and every municipality in an indiscriminate fashion. The Study shares the same concerns as the Task Force on Regional Planning that premature delegation may indeed have adverse consequences on the quality of planning services rendered at both the local and regional levels and may potentially cause unwarranted plan conformity problems of a most contentious nature.

Recommendation 15. The Study recommends that the Board develop criteria on the basis of which it would advise the Minister on the granting of SAA to municipalities. It is suggested that the development of such criteria and the proposing of municipalities eligible for SAA could form the basis of consultation between the Board, and the RPCs and the municipalities, perhaps through two municipal associations.

The Study differs somewhat from the Task Force members in their assessment of the extent to which the delegation of subdivision approval authortiy is to become a widespread phenomenon. In this respect, the Study does not believe that there will be a substantial number of municipalities desiring to become their own SAA's, largely because of the associated costs involved, and also because of the good services that they have been receiving from the regional planning commission.

Moreover, if it is true that some of the recent municipal requests for SAA are the result of disgruntled feeling about the regional plan being unnecessarily restrictive the RPCs may be able to mitigate this through a more effective use of the regional plan, through better policy design, or through an improved process of communication to better municipal understanding of the role of subdivision approval.

Consequently, the Study does not share the same concern as to the negative impact on commission finances of granting SAA to local communities at least at the moment. In the unlikely event that the requests to devolve SAA may occur on an extensive scale in the future, then the implications will have to be reassessed in greater depth.

Potential Plan Nonconformity

With the development of a three-tier planning hierarchy, in which both the regional and municipal plan levels are now mandatory, the question of how the levels will relate to each other becomes serious and persistent.

With the delegation of SAA to more and more municipalities an increasing likelihood, the Task Force fear, and rightly so in the opinion of the Study, that general municipal plans and land use bylaws will be prepared which will not conform to the regional plan. As we have argued earlier, this possibility is much greater in the present situation, in which regional plans have been framed to do very much the job of a municipal plan and a land use bylaw. Change the regional plan -- make it a broad regional-level policy document -- and much of the nonconformity over detail should not arise, or should arise less frequently.

Nevertheless, even in the case of an "ideal" regional plan, and "ideal" municipal plans and land use bylaws, disagreements over land use policies and their locational implications could be expected to occur, even with the good will of all parties. The present Act requires conformity but has little procedure to ensure this will occur; once identified, however, the offended party may appeal to the Alberta Planning Board for a hearing and a determination. Notwithstanding this provision, the nonconforming plan or bylaw can take effect and development can occur between a complaint being lodged and a decision rendered.

Recommendation 16. The Study encourages each commission to develop an appropriate means for information exchange, discussion and negotiation centred about the necessity for the regional and municipal documents to be in agreement, and to actively pursue relationships at both the political and staff levels aimed at fostering a cooperative climate in the region.

The Study is of two minds as to whether the Board should recommend changes to the Act requiring RPC's to establish mechanisms for arbitrating conformity, or whether these should be up to local discretion, bearing in mind that nonconformity cases can be brought before the Board in any case, should local efforts fail. After looking at the points in favour of and against both positions, we have decided in favour of the less authoritarian approach *for those cases in which a regional plan has not yet been adopted,* but where a plan is in place, are recommending a procedure for circulating and commenting upon municipal instruments. This is discussed below. Recommendation 16 will, therefore, be a necessary device to bring already passed municipal instruments into conformity once a new regional plan is adopted, and has made them nonconforming.

Recommendation 17. The Study recognizes that the Board has a special responsibility to develop understanding at both the regional and municipal levels on the implications of the new Act, especially regarding the regional plan and conformity areas, and therefore recommends that the Board:

(i) develop guidelines on what the Act intends in the way of purposes and functional and operational relationships between the regional plan, the general municipal plan, the area structure plan, area redevelopment plan, the land use bylaw and the Subdivision Regulation; and

(ii) sponsor workshops, in cooperation with the RPC's, designed to develop understanding of the Act, its various instruments and to assist elected officials and commission staff to develop land use policies at both the regional and municipal levels which are supportive rather than conflictual.

Nevertheless, even in the best climate of discussion and negotiation there will undoubtedly occur differences of opinion and conflicts over whether policies conform or not, which may not be amendable to local solution or which may benefit by having an airing before a third party. For these, hopefully isolated cases, a mechanism should be provided in the Act so that the differences can be resolved before an offending belaw is passed, and before harmful development is allowed to occur. We are concerned here with new bylaws and municipal plans being developed *after* the regional plan is in place.

Recommendation 18. The Study recommends that the Board seek to amend the Planning Act so as to ensure conformity subsequent to the adoption of a regional plan, through the following procedures:

(i) The RPC should be given authority to review and comment upon local statutory planning documents for regional plan conformity. The municipality should be required to seek the advice of the RPC after first reading has been given to a proposed statutory planning document, thus providing sufficient time for consultation before the municipality has adopted the instrument. Before third reading is given, the municipality must seek the opinion of the RPC attesting to conformity of the instrument with the regional plan.

(ii) A municipality shall not adopt or amend a statutory planning document which has been judged non-conforming by the RPC.

(iii) After third reading, the municipality shall refer the statutory planning document to the RPC.

(iv) Any instrument judged by the RPC or the municipality to be non-conforming shall be referred by the RPC or the municipality to the Board, unless such non-conformity cannot be first resolved by the two parties.

(v) The Board shall resolve the question of whether conformity exists, and may hold a public hearing or conduct an investigation to so determine.

(vi) The Board, once having decided the nonconformity issue, will refer the decision back to the commission and municipality for their information and follow-up action.

(vii) A municipality shall not take any action to allow development once a non-conformity situation has been detected and the municipality so notified.

This approach recognizes the statutory supremacy of the regional plan and ensures that once it is adopted all newly developed municipal instruments will be required to conform and subjected to a procedure to ensure conformity. This recommendation should therefore ensure that the quality of regional development will be protected, while at the same time allowing municipalities the full exercise of their discretion over local development matters.

Municipal Development Review

Suggestions have been advanced, both in connection with the plan conformity question and the concern over the delegation of subdivision approval authority, that there is a need for subdivision and development decisions made by the municipality to be reviewed as to their conformity with the regional plan.

This view seems to arise from a thought that development could be improved under many sets of circumstances which, wholly or in part, may not be compatible with the spirit of the Regional Plan. In view of RPC past skills in this area, it would seem practical to utilize this talent to the benefit of the municipalities in particular and the overall region in general.

While appreciating that philosophically there is potential for inconsistencies to develop in the system, the Study believes that the remedy lies in four areas:

1. a better articulation of what is regional and what is local, so that there is a clearer articulation and hence appreciation of roles, and avoidance of non-conformity problems.

2. the development of the regional plan as a broad, policy document, concerned with regional rather than municipal issues;

3. the encouragement of municipal appreciation for the role of planning, and the development of appropriate technical planning capabilities, either through municipal staff, or use of RPC staff or consultants; and

4. the development of mechanisms to ensure negotiation, where possible, or adjudication, where necessary (Recommendation 16 and 18).

Recommendation 19: The Study recommends that the Board initiate a program to develop professional standards among Development Control Officers and to support this with the appropriate training programs, as a means of ensuring that development decisions at the municipal level are supportive of high planning standards.

Coordination of Regional Planning and Provincial Activities

Earlier in the Study, we noted that provincial involvement was becoming more and more pervasive in all functional policy areas, and was affecting practically every aspect of life in every region and municipality. As a result, there was a growing need for coordination of activities at all levels.

The introduction of the Planning Act, 1977 has provided additional incentives for co-ordination. The Alberta Planning Board, through adoption of the Regional Plan Guidelines, has strongly endorsed policy consultation between provincial and regional agencies as a vital part of the regional plan preparation process, and necessary to the success of achieving complementarity between provincial and regional policies. It also supports the potential role of the regional plan as an important instrument for assisting in the development and implementation of provincial policies and programs.

To the extent that a regional plan is a comprehensive, broadly-based policy document -- as we have suggested earlier it should be -- it offers an opportunity to serve as a developmental planning tool, that is, a mechanism for integrating provincial policies or directions into a regional planning program, allowing the latter to indicate regional needs and the former to tailor programs of use to the region's specific needs.

Recommendation 20. The Study endorses the principle that the regional plan should serve to integrate Provincial policies, but recognizes the practical difficulties of it doing so. The Study therefore encourages the Board to actively promote departmental policy development, around specific problem or issue areas, for one or more RPC's for inclusion in the regional plan, through a process of negotiation between the affected parties. It is suggested that a demonstration project, around a particular policy area (i.e. farmland preservation), would be a useful initiative for the Board.

As noted earlier, the least clear part of the planning hierarchy is the Provincial level. Historically, the departments are playing a much greater role today than ever before, and their activities overlap in numerous ways with the policy development activities of the RPA's. The Alberta Planning Board has begun to serve a leadership role in developing policy of relevance to regional planning, policy which a number of departments can formally assent to.

In the view of the Study, this activity should continue and should aim to put in place Board policies affecting all eight functional areas of relevance to regional planning. It is important to note, however, that these policies would be tailored to an interpretation of Provincial interests, in the regional sphere, rather than to a unified Provincial position on its own policies and programs, such as one finds in a "Provincial plan".

Recommendation 21. The Study recommends that the Board encourage its departmental members to use the various regional plans as devices to aid in the identification of departmental policies, and take action to develop a compilation of such policies as a means to aid both RPC's and departments in the joint task of policy development.

The Study feels that Provincial departments in general have not fully utilized the RPC and the regional plan in the planning for and distribution of departmental programs, preferring instead to deal on a one-to-one basis with specific municipalities. There is some indication that this may contribute to intermunicipal competition and work to undermine the development of effective regional planning; moreover, it may not represent the most effective use of Provincial monies.

If the Government is to realize the most effective use of its funds spent on regional planning, it should be willing to work toward at the very least, the coordination of information on its program activities at a regional level, so that RPC's can assess and plan for the impacts of Provincial programs.

The above does not, however, suggest that the regional planning commissions should ignore, or down play the role of provincial program coordination at the regional level, as many provincial programs do have tremendous regional impacts.

In order to bring about satisfactory integration between regional and provincial policies, and monitoring of provincial program impact, there needs to be flexible use of the formal and informal coordination mechanisms. A RPC should be prepared, for example, to work with both the provincial department head-office staff for policy input, and with the department's field office staff for technical input on program impacts.

While the Study, in general, prefers the informal to the authoritarian, formal or structural solution to problems, there may be a need for the Board to formally encourage Provincial input at the commission level, as a means of overcoming the feeling that the new Act has downplayed the Provincial role in the region through specifically excluding Provincial department members from sitting on the RPC. Perhaps, without a formal commitment to regional planning, the departments may continue to maintain a low level of communication with the RPCs.

Recommendation 22. The Study considers it vital that the Province affirm the importance of good communication between the departments and the RPCs, so as to encourage joint policy development, to the extent possible, and therefore recommends that the Board consider changes to the Act establishing "Provincial-Regional Coordination Committees", to act as a continuous forum at the regional level, for the development of joint policy.

This, of course, has implications for the working relationship between headquarters staff and regional office staff. It would appear that some mechanism, if it does not exist already, needs to be developed to ensure better integration between them, so that the knowledge base of the field office can be fed into the development of policy at the provincial headquarters.

The Role of Regional Planning Commissions

Recent Changes Inadequate

Earlier in this paper, it was concluded that the organizations within the regional planning system were being called upon, as a result of the Planning Act, 1977, its subsequent amendments, and other factors in the environment (which we characterized as "turbulence"), to change their perspectives and their relationships with each other.

As other regional planning-related organizations increasingly adopt the new planning framework in their operations, a number of things will occur: more and more municipalities can be expected to seek subdivision approval authority, thus placing transitional stresses on the commissions to aid the transfer; municipalities in general will be playing a more active role in planning, requiring additional RPC effort to negotiate conformity questions and to provide advisory services on a stepped-up basis; Provincial departments will place pressure on the RPC to engage in consultation around mutual policy concerns; and a number of relatively new participants in the system will request assistance and call upon the RPCs to engage in negotiations around a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues.

New Goals and Activities

With the shift from the "old" to the "new" planning framework the RPC will be expected to spend more time in consultation, negotiation, conciliation and public education and less in strictly regulatory activities. The increased scope of the regional plan will expand the RPC's horizons, getting it into economic development and social planning areas.

As its influence increases, compensating for its loss of responsibility as a result of SAA devolution, its goals will assume a leadership and advocacy dimension. Its municipal advisory and public education roles will increase in proportion to its ability to respond to pressing and potential public issues.

Plan monitoring and constant recycling of ideas and policies will take on a significance, as the regional plan becomes the focus for discussion and negotiation rather than an end product in itself. Communication with Provincial departments will be strengthened and joint policy development will become more prevalent. Although a cohesive set of Provincial policies specifically oriented to all of regional planning is only a remote possibility, jointly developed policy relevant to a particular region or regions will be more common. Over time, the regional-provincial interface can be expected to be addressed.

The Study affirms the important role to be played by the RPCs in the years ahead, especially in light of their generally good reputation and proven track-record of concern for planning and development matters. In recent years, however, events have overwhelmed the regional planning system and important new initiatives are required to place it once more in a leadership role.

Recommendation 23. The Study recommends that the Board issue a public statement confirming the important role of the RPC in the system of community and regional planning, and undertake a program of public education to inform decision-makers and the general public about the commissions and the Board's support for them.

Recommendation 24. a) The Study encourages the Board to negotiate with the commissions a set of policies on their goals, activities, structures and resources, designed to assist them to identify and respond appropriately to the changes impacting upon them.

b) The Board should be prepared to offer financial assistance, training programs, organization development facilitation and advice on a continuing basis to those RPCs willing to participate in preparing their organizations to better handle the pressures impacting upon them.

The roles presently performed by the RPCs will continue but an increased emphasis will be placed on regional planning, municipal advice and intermunicipal discussion. The regulatory role may be expected to decline.

Recommendation 25.

The Study notes that the RPCs will necessarily become more frequently involved in situations requiring nego-

tiation, facilitation and conciliation skills. The Study recommends to the Board, therefore, that the Board sponsor training sessions aimed at equipping RPC staff with these skills.

Structural and Resource Changes

Under the sections above on membership and regional-provincial relations we suggested two major structural changes; one, the commissions could recommend membership representation changes based on a number of criteria viewed by the Province as important; and this formula could be reapplied after each new municipal election, to reflect demographic and other changes; two, the Board was urged to consider changing the Act to establish "Provincial-Regional Coordination Committees" as a means of formalizing Provincial input on a continuing basis into the work of the commission.

The Study is mindful of the importance of the role played by elected officials on the commissions, and sees an opportunity to develop and expand the creative aspects of their role to the benefit of the region.

Recommendation 26. The Study suggests that the Board might wish to pursue the question of more creatively involving elected officials in RPC activities, through establishment of a working group to explore this question.

Recommendation 27. The Study encourages RPC staff to actively explore decision-making technologies such as Strategic Choice, which offer opportunities to involve commission members at an earlier stage in the technical work of the RPC.

As one of the many solutions offered on the subject of unequal commission membership, the use of the commission committees had no little attraction. At least one RPC has found this a very effective device for avoiding serious internal divisions (the workability of this approach may be due to the particular demographics of that region, however).

Recommendation 28. The Study encourages the RPCs to jointly explore the use of a variety of committee structures as one means of more creatively and effectively utilizing the skills of the elected officials on the commission.

The role of the RPCs is sufficiently important to be widely known throughout their particular regions, yet recent research indicates that there is widespread

lack of knowledge -- and in some areas, misinformation and suspicion -- regarding the important job performed by the commissions. The importance of a heightened public presence has been mentioned earlier, and both the Board and the RPC have a role to play in public education.

Recommendation 29. The Study urges the RPCs to develop in-house skills in public relations, use of the media and public education, and to undertake programs aimed at explaining the role of the RPC in the planning and development system.

Recommendation 30. a) The Study suggests that the RPA's might wish to consider the formation of a Regional Planning Association of Alberta as a means of increasing the public profile of regional planning, and to address the growing need to transfer information, compare experience, cooperate on selected projects, second staff, jointly retain consultants and share other scarce resources.

b) The Study recommends that the Board support such a move by the RPA's, and encourage participation by interested parties in the Provincial departments.

The organizational analysis earlier documented the pressures the RPCs have been subjected to and recorded their organizational responses, as they shifted from one mode of behaviour to another. Hierarchical structures replaced simpler, "flatter" internal organizations; specialization supplanted generalist staff; large replaced small. The "turbulent" environment to which the RPCs must adapt in the days ahead calls for organizations to be self-learning, value-based and generative, and open to change and interaction. One way of accomplishing this is to utilize a formal hierarchy for control and administrative purposes, with the formation of task or work groups as particular situations warrant it. In this way, the organization chart is "vertical", with the relationships running across the pyramids, coalescing with relative ease to counter changing outside demands.

Recommendation 31. The Study recommends that the RPC's adopt staff development and training programs aimed at team development, and facilitate the use of the work group approach as a means of maximizing skills and staff resources, and developing latent abilities.

The majority of RPA's organize their staff on a functional basis, with "regional" "current" and "municipal" sections or an urban/rural split, providing services to

the clientele. Unless strong inter-sectional ties are created, this raises the possibility of the delivery of segmented planning services, fostering a perception among the clientele that there are different types of planning. Staff learning and development are inhibited too unless sectional transfers are the role of the day. The Study believes that a subregional or "area planning team" approach is a good way to overcome these difficulties, as it encourages open communication cross fertilization of ideas among the planners, joint decision-making and so on.

Recommendation 32. The Study encourages RPA's to adopt the subregional or "area planning team" approach as an effective way of delivering their services and a better utilization of staff, encouraging both in-house learning and staff development.

Recommendation 33. The Study recommends that the Board establish a work group of planners and resource people to examine the question of staffing, organization and quality of work life in the regional planning agencies, since these issues will become of greater importance in the future success of RPA's.

As part of this Study, all professional planners in Alberta have been canvassed on their in-career training and educational needs, and the manner in which they would prefer to have them addressed. Complete tabulations are not yet available, but it seems clear that there are needs not currently being met by the existing institutional delivery systems. The Study believes that the Board has an improtant role to play in facilitating in-career training of RPA staff and therefore will recommend that this be addressed. (note: see chapter on Role of the Board).

The Role of Municipalities

Municipal discontent with some aspects of regional planning appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon, and one affecting urban and rural municipalities differently. The principal unhappiness is with the rurals, who view the commission membership structure as working against their interests and the RPCs as being dictatorial in

the matter of subdivision approvals and the regional plan. The latter has perhaps, caused the greatest problem, since it is perceived as allocating growth in a manner which favours the urban municipalities and penalizes the rurals.

As we have indicated above, both the intention of the regional plan and the structure of membership require alterations so as to reduce this antipathy among the rural municipalities. We will discuss this in greater detail below.

For much of their history the RPC's have been providing a municipal planning service, and doing so at a smaller total cost than the municipalities would have had to pay were they doing it themselves. The contribution of the RPC's to developing an interest in and an acceptance of planning principles among Alberta's municipalities is significant and worthy of note. Indeed, without their work over the years in fostering an appreciation of the necessity to plan, many municipalities today would be suffering an unpalatable combination of blight, poor servicing, unsightly fringe development, and an unbalanced tax base.

Since it is mandatory that all levels in the heirarchy have planning instruments, this calls for a re-examination of the relationship of the municipal to the regional instruments.

Previously, with the RPC doing both the regional and municipal planning, and then approving the subdivision applications, questions of how the one would relate to the other seem not to have occurred, or if they did, they occurred within the confines of the commission's staff operations. But with municipalities now required by the new Act to put in place general municipal plans and land use bylaws, and to do so quickly, a number have had to utilize consultants or hire their own staff in preference to using the RPC, which has been, in many respects, working beyond capacity.

As part of taking on this new responsibility, many municipalities have had to examine their own aspirations and expectations and to translate these into policies which will satisfy local concerns, while not offending regional policies, as expressed in the regional plan.

This has proven to be difficult, if not impossible, for those municipalities which aspire to amounts or types of development not contemplated in the regional plan, and has led to complaints about the restrictiveness of the plan, the way in which it is adopted by the commission (the membership question), and the value of regional planning in general. In a limited number of cases, it has resulted in pressures for the municipality to obtain SAA, which would remove the RPC from all involvement in local matters. (It would not, of course, remove the requirements for municipal planning instruments to conform with the regional plan.)

Appropriate Roles in the Hierarchy

As we have indicated earlier, both the RPC's and the municipalities find themselves in difficulties as the implications of the new Planning Act are worked out and long-standing ways of doing things are replaced by ways more appropriate to the changed circumstances. A hierarchy of instruments is now required, with municipal plans and land use bylaws focussing on local issues, and doing so in some detail, and regional plans concentrating on regional issues, providing a broad policy framework within which the municipal instruments con co-exist.

The hierarchy, as such, is not new but a number of adjustments are required so that each level deals with matters *appropriate to it, without infringing on the other levels.*

Therefore a number of the recommendations made earlier in connection with the regional plan were aimed at clarifying the relationships between levels in the hierarchy. The regional plan is to be the supreme document guiding regional growth and development (see Recommendations 1 and 6); written in policy terms (Recommendation 2); in layman's language (Recommendation 1); with a comprehensive focus (Recommendation 9); serving as a framework for municipal planning (Recommendation 2); and as a focus for continous negotiation between the RPC and the municipalities (Recommendation 10). And it must do these things without intruding on either the municipal or provincial roles in the heirarchy (Recommendation 7 and 8).

The relationship between municipal and regional instruments is a key aspect to making the new framework work. Recommendation 11 suggested that appropriate means for bringing old' municipal instruments into conformity with 'new' regional plans be developed and guidelines formulated to aid in the development of conforming general municipal plans, land use bylaws and area structure/redevelopment plans; Recommendation 18 detailed a procedure whereby 'new' municipal statutory documents would be reviewed by the RPC to check for conformity with an already-existing regional plan.

But the bringing of municipal and regional instruments into harmony is only part of the requirement if the system is to move toward the new framework.

The Role of Subdivision Approval Authority

Two major changes characterize the municipal role before and after the 1977 Act: the requirement that virtually all municipalities do planning, and the making available of the subdivision approval authority (SAA) to municipalities. Taken together, these reflect a commitment by the Province that the municipal level of government should eventually assume full responsibility for the planning and development of land use, of a local nature (Recommendation 14 above).

The Study has endorsed both of these major changes as in keeping with the gradual evolution of responsibilities in the system, and as a positive step to enhancing the *regional* aspect of regional planning. It is our belief that regional planning will be stronger when municipalities assume their full responsibility for local planning, including control over implementation, through SAA and the development permit system, and are able to take part in commission deliberations knowledgable of local planning and ready to assume a role in making regionally-sensitive decisions.

Notwithstanding this philosophical position, however, the Study is concerned that the further delegation of SAA be done in a manner which will ensure that the land use planning and development process is safeguarded, and has suggested (in Recommendation 15 above) that appropriate criteria be developed so that the Board could advise the Minister on the granting of SAA. A matter of some concern to the Study is the potential financial impact that the acquisition of SAA could have an applicant municipalities.

Recommendation 34. (a) The Study recommends that the Board study the costs associated with the delegation of subdivision approval authority, and that the Board then make this information available to municipalities applying for SAA.

b) In the event that the costs to the municipality or the RPC are judged severe, it is recommended that the Board consider mitigating measures, bearing in mind the philosophy behind the Planning Fund and the Planning Act, 1977.

Improving Municipal - Regional Relations

While the Study is cognizant of the long and valuable contribution made by the regional planning commissions, it cannot help but be concerned by the evidence of recent municipal disenchantment, not only as expressed in questionnaires, but also revealed through recurring expressions of concern over the basis for commission membership, the polarization over regional plans and the desire to obtain SAA as a means (perhaps) of circumventing the regional plan. While some of this may be the 'natural' competition between municipalities striving for a share in regional growth, or disagreeing on matters of planning approach or philosophy, an element seems to be dissatisfaction with the way RPC's conduct their business, especially with municipalities.

Several recommendations have been made above to address this elusive yet recurrent theme. It is suggested that the RPC's use the regional plan as a tool for negotiating with municipalities (Recommendation 10) and make more use of the consulting than directing mode in their dealings. To encourage conformity, especially when municipal instruments predate the regional plan, the RPC's are encouraged to "develop an appropriate means for information exchange, discussion and negotiation..." and to "actively pursue relationships at both the political and staff levels aimed at fostering a cooperative climate in the region" (Recommendation 16).

The Study is aware of the critical role played by elected members and RPC staff in making the changed relationships implied in the new framework work, and it has therefore recommended staff training sessions be sponsored by the Board in negotiation, conciliation and facilitation skills (Recommendations 24 & 25), supported by key changes in the way staff are structured in their work activities (Recommendations 31 & 32). The way elected officials are creatively involved with staff (Recommendation 27) and in running commission business (Recommendation 26), is also important and requires further study. As the earlier discussion on membership pointed out, there are many ways of structuring committees and so forth to improve the effectiveness of members and to overcome internal polarities (Recommendations 13 & 28), and the Study has recommended that these be explored.

It is suggested that recent municipal concerns may be a concomitant to the major changes in shifting from the Pre-to the Post-1978 framework, which calls for structural and behavioural modifications by both the municipalities and the commissions. To the extent that a clarification of respective roles can help, it has been suggested that the Board undertake a program of public infromation (Recommendation 23), and negotiate with the RPC's a set of policies specifying goals, activities, structures and resources, and make available resources so that the RPC's can prepare their staff for the new role (Recommendation 24).

A number of similar activities could be undertaken by and on behalf of municipalities.

Recommendation 35. The Study recommends that the Board encourage the Department of Municipal Affairs to

(i) develop a program of orientation in planning for newly-elected municipal officials;

(ii) develop a continuing training program for non-elected municipal officials, through the "municipal administrator's program" or similar means; and

(iii) sponsor on a regular basis workshops on particular planning issues affecting both municipal and regional planning, designed to explore avenues for solution through joint action.

Metropolitan Development and Regional Planning

A persistant question throughout the Study relates to the role of regional planning in addressing the special problems and needs of the two metropolitan cities of Calgary and Edmonton

Traditional Role

The issue has been long-standing, dating back to the 1950's, when district planning was first introduced as a means to resolve the urban fringe development problems of Calgary and Edmonton.

The concept of district planning was subsequently extended to the other regions (most of which are city-centred), as a response to the fringe development problems of the regions' main urban centres.

The special situation of Calgary and Edmonton was accorded early recognition by the Provincial Government, through allowing them to become their own subdivision approving authorities. This enabled the city councils to determine the pattern and pace of development within their own boundaries, while relying upon the regional planning commissions to coordinate development activities on the fringe areas, through the regional plans.

Thus from the very outset, there has evolved in Alberta -- both historically and functionally -- a dependent relationship between regional planning and development in the metropolitan, or larger urban centres. Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, etc. have, in spite of their relatively inadequate membership representation on the regional planning commissions, all managed to exert a strong influence on the commissions' approach to regional planning. Their predominance can be illustrated by the adoption of the Metro Part of the Edmonton Preliminary Regional Plan as early as 1957; by the unfailing support given by the Calgary Regional Plan to the preservation of the Unicity concept; and by the fact that, historically there is evidence to suggest that major advances in the regional planning concept were often the result of the need to address the problems of Calgary and Edmonton.

Recent Developments

In recent years the high growth rates of Edmonton and Calgary and the associated demand for expensive infrastructure to service new residential and industrial areas has brought the Provincial government into what was previously largely a regional or municipal concern. The need for Provincial approval for the annexation of land; coupled with municipal demands on the Provincial purse for roads, expressways, transit systems, utilities, housing and so on, has made metropolitan development very much a joint effort.

The need for such a joint effort, and the absence of an effective intergovernmental partnership to resolve the joint areas of concern were fully acknowledged by the Province in its recent decision on the City of Edmonton's Annexation Application. In approving the annexation application (with modified boundaries), the decision sought to:

a) guarantee that Edmonton will continue to maintain its preeminent position in the region, through such measures as providing for its continued expansion, while limiting the growth of St. Albert and Sherwood Park;

b) create, through restructuring of the existing ERPC, a new Edmonton Metropolitan Region Planning Commission with a substantial increase in membership representation by the City of Edmonton; and

c) establish a Regional Services Commission to deliver municipal services such as water and sewage treatment, waste disposal, etc. across municipal boundaries and on a regional basis, involving close partnership between the affected municipalities and the provincial departments concerned.

Application to Other RPCs

The Study endorses the above as timely and potentially successful measures for resolving the unique problems of Edmonton and its neighbouring communities. It is questionable, however, whether the other city-centered regions, including the Calgary region, should receive the

same treatment, since these do not exhibit the same high degree of competition and interdependence between their main urban centres and the surrounding communities, warranting a re-design of the regional planning structure.

However, to the extent that the situations in these large urban communities are not static, and that historically they have invariably served as the main foci of population and economic growth for their regions, it is important that their viability be assured and supported by planning activities. In this regard, it may also be observed that over time, some of these large urban centres may want to become their own SAA, thereby creating the need for a new working relationship with their RPCs.

Thus, it is important that a number of actions should be taken to ensure a harmonious relationship between the large urban centres and the other communities in the regions, including

- protection for urban expansion in the regional plan;
- encouragement and assistance from the regional planning commission towards resolving planning conflicts between the main urban centre and its adjoining communities; and
- monitoring and positive intervention by the Alberta Planning Board and Provincial departments on a timely basis, to deal with impending or actual problem areas prior to their entrenchment.

Recommendation 36. It is recommended the RPCs continue to use the regional plan to assist in managing the continued expansion of the main urban centres in an efficient and orderly manner through such means as: inter-municipal consultation and negotiation; creative use of joint municipal plans and inter-municipal servicing agreements; and continuous monitoring of development activities on the urban fringe areas.

Recommendation 37. It is recommended that the Alberta Planning Board, in collaboration with the Department of Municipal Affairs, the regional planning commissions and the municipalities, initiate a joint process to closely and continously monitor the development in large urban centres, with a view to recommending solutions to the problems that may arise from time to time (e.g. redesign of the regional planning structure, to reflect the emerging needs of the region; the creation of some form of regional servicing scheme; conflict-resolution, etc.).

The Role of The Board

It is anticipated that the Board would strengthen its recently adopted leadership and monitoring role; continue to act as a catalyst in the development of Provincial land use policies (such as the Rural Industrial Land Use Policy); and continue to strongly encourage the RPCs to develop regional plans which are accurate reflections of current municipal and Provincial policy aspirations, as well as being technically sound and informative public documents.

These and its other new roles will most certainly require that the Board streamline its policy development and regional plan review procedures; strengthen its technical capabilities in a number of areas; and examine its present heavy workload in appeals and give consideration to new procedures to mitigate the situation.

The staff and resource implications -- if any -- of these changes to the Board operations are currently under investigation.

APPENDIX A

Publications Associated with
the Regional Planning System Study

1. Terms of Reference, Regional Planning System Study, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, October 5, 1978

2. Revised Terms of Reference, Regional Planning System Study, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, February 6, 1979

3. Toward A Framework for Resolving Regional Planning Issues, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, April 20, 1979

4. A Mechanism for the Review and Approval of Regional Plans by the Alberta Government, A Proposal, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, June 27, 1979

5. Coordination in Regional Planning, A Consultant's Report, Alan Sutton, British Columbia Research Institute, Vancouver, B. C., July 20, 1979

6. Guidelines for Regional Plan Review, Alberta Planning Board, Alberta Municipal Affairs, January 29, 1980.

7. Plan Non-Conformity: Notes on the Shape of the Problem; Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, April 23, 1980

8. A Proposed Training Program in Planning, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, April 23, 1980

9. Municipal Attitudes Towards Regional Planning in Alberta, a Report by the Joint Working Committee of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, October 8, 1980*

10. Regional Planning Experience Elsewhere, A Discussion Paper, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, October 31, 1980

11. Public Lands and Resource Issues, A Discussion Paper, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, April 1, 1981

12. Interim Report and Recommendations to the Alberta Planning Board, Directors' Task Force on Regional Planning, April, 1981*

*Reports by groups advising the Study Team

13. Demands Upon the System, A Consultant's Report, Woods Gordon Management Consultants, Edmonton, May 22, 1981

14. Regional Planning System Study, Draft Background Report, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, June 15, 1981

15. A Summary of Preliminary Findings, A Discussion Paper, Inter-Agency Planning Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs, September 2, 1981